

# NEW TO METAL DETECTING?

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Every year thousands of people consider starting metal detecting as a past time or hobby and many of them will go on to actually purchase or borrow their first metal detector to see what it's about. These are the first stages in hopefully enjoying one of the most beneficial and advantageous of past times and to becoming a competent metal detectorist. Someone once said "anyone who considers taking up metal detecting will probably do so to some degree soon or at one time in the future" and we think that's probably true. No doubt at this early stage you will have plenty of questions and so we hope that this Beginners Guide will answer some of them. Never be afraid to ask such questions, seasoned metal detectorists will hopefully be only too pleased to guide you and of course at this stage you may already be a member of a detecting club. Whatever you do and how you go about it is your choice, especially in judging what elements of the hobby are most suitable / interesting for you, and from what detector you finally purchase to where you hope to use it. Please remember this is not a hundred percent comprehensive guide, it's written to give you some basic advice. Should you have a question of a more specific nature relating to metal detecting in general or perhaps to identify those first finds you have made then please contact us at [sales@joanallen.co.uk](mailto:sales@joanallen.co.uk) and we will do our best to give you a speedy unbiased and accurate answer.

**It is probably a good stage here to outline just some of the many factors that show how beneficial or indeed advantageous metal detecting can be.**

- (1) Metal Detecting is openly available to all age groups
- (2) For older participants it can help to keep you mentally stimulated as well as physically fit and healthy
- (3) A good new starter model can be purchased from around £100+.
- (4) It provides hands on experience of finding and touching your heritage, whether it's a rare Roman gold coin or a Victorian bronze penny.
- (5) You will never accurately predict what your next find will definitely be. One moment you are looking at a fragment of Bronze Age Axe, five minutes later part of a crashed Spitfire from the last war. The anticipation of the unknown is awe inspiring.
- (6) The making of new friends and acquaintances who all share the same interest as you do.
- (7) The versatility of metal detecting enables you to join a club or form your own, or indeed remain as a single individual if that's what you prefer.
- (8) Metal detecting is the perfect partner for a multi-hobby as it combines so well with other interests. Many metal detectorists are also keen on walking, rambling, photography, wildlife, and of course collecting a wide variety of metallic coins and artefacts. Many detectorists are also intensely keen on angling; I guess that that is the same feeling when one catches that prize specimen fish that is experienced in finding a hoard of coins.
- (9) You can improve the chances of making great discoveries yourself by researching sites, looking at the land and thinking how people may have settled on it and farmed it. Don't worry if as of yet you don't have huge estates of limitless acreage to search, with perseverance they will come later. For the time being why not ask friends or family to search their back gardens. Your friendly local publican surely has a plot of garden you could get started on. The opportunities are limitless.
- (10) Most of us have been to museums at one time or another and seen marvellous coins and objects in their collections. The joy of finding your own similar coins and artefacts is something that you will always remember from your first Roman coin to the finds you made the other week.

(11) Remember some people like to firstly buy or obtain a metal detector and work on all the other aspects later such as finding out where they can search and how it works. Others prefer to do some ground work first, asking other detectorists for advice. Whichever route you take it's purely your choice. Everyone is different in their approach. However I would say whatever method you apply if you find out things are not working out or there is something that you are unsure about then please ask someone about your concerns. Over the years some detectors will end up in the cupboard under the stairs. Gathering dust as opposed to great finds, often because at the beginning something wasn't going well and the person ends up disillusioned.

(12) If you are perhaps retired and have a bit more spare time why not try metal detecting? Many retired married couples can be found searching for our history with their metal detectors and some have even made fantastic discoveries. However all of them delight in sharing their experiences and seeing what the other has found, nothing like a bit of healthy competition from one's spouse either!!

(13) You don't have to be physically actively involved in metal detecting to still be able to enjoy its benefits. You may have grand children who would love to have a detector for a birthday or Christmas present. They may find artefacts that can be used at reminiscing activities held by elderly people's clubs societies and day centres. There are no boundaries to the positive elements of this past time. It has far reaching effects in many aspects of society from simply deriving pleasure to enhancing all our knowledge of heritage and history through advancing academic research

(14) So we all wish you the very best of luck and hope that you will decide to join the ever increasing number of metal detectorists who find and help in the preservation of our past. In fact it can be said that once you become a detectorist you will be actively engaged in finding our all our yesterdays today and ensuring they will be able to be seen tomorrow.

(15) One of the greatest pleasures that can be experienced by a metal detectorist is being able to return a treasured item of lost property back to its original owner or family. This can range from a wedding ring lost whilst pushing a child on a swing in a public park to the location of stolen property that has been buried. One of the most emotional and treasured moments in relation to this happened a few years ago. This was when the dog tag from an American bomber crewman who was sadly killed when his aircraft crashed in 1945. Incredibly some sixty years after the event the crewman's dog tag was located by a metal detectorist. Through some quite complex research I was able to locate his brother in the USA and the dog tag was returned to him. A truly poignant example of just how far reaching metal detecting can be.

## NEWCOMER QUESTIONS AND FAQs

This are just a selection of questions and facts that I asked when I started up over three decades ago and random things that are still asked by the newcomers of today, we hope it helps.

### **WHAT METAL DETECTOR SHOULD I GET AS A FIRST MACHINE?**

There is no specific answer to this often asked question. There are too many variables to consider, many of which you must ask yourself. There are some superb new starter detectors on the market, but just which is best for you, is something you must determine. Look on [www.joanallen.co.uk](http://www.joanallen.co.uk) or call 01959 571255 for product based opinions. Read the two magazines Treasure Hunting and The Searcher these often contain very handy tips and field tests. Things to consider are: do you want a light or heavier machine? What is your budget? Do you want a simple turn on and go detector or do you want something with variable controls, or both? Have a good look around, listen to advice, make a list of models that interest you, and if you are going to buy a detector it's

almost certain it will be one from your listing. At the beginning there are many issues to consider, don't rush, take your time and research a selection of detectors and very quickly you will find all the facts and statements start to make sense

### **DO I HAVE TO SPEND THOUSANDS OF POUNDS?**

No not at all, there are some superb detectors in the £175 to £500 region. Remember to stick to your budget. Some new comers may stop at this price range as they thought metal detectors would be a lot cheaper anyway. But remember this is a highly sophisticated piece of equipment and when we reflect everyday prices for things like televisions, stereo systems etc then it seems quite reasonable. Anyway a TV or stack system may be a good investment to some, but it's your detector that's going to find you coins and artefacts. It is worth noting that Joan Allen Electronics offer 0% interest on many of their purchase payment options and this can be a great help to those on reduced budgets and actually make some of the more expensive detectors available.

### **IF I PAY TOP PRICE WILL I GET A BETTER MACHINE?**

In theory yes. If you want to start at the top range that's entirely up to you, some people grasp technology quickly whilst some like to progress at their own pace. Like all things more money usually means better build quality, performance and durability. It does not mean however that you will definitely find better things, but it may mean your finds rate is increased overall if the top model has the facility for deeper target location, which it almost certainly will do. However many aspects of metal detecting are linked. If you bought a top range machine and used it say in a gravelly garden centre car park, it's unlikely that you would find much of interest. Yet if you took the detector to a field adjacent to a 1000 year old church logic says you should do better. However logic itself is not always a trustworthy aspect, there are simply no guarantees as much is down to Lady Luck and good old Fate. But that is what makes detecting so fascinating anyway. Two commonly heard phrases here are "Well whatever detector you have got you've got to put the search head over the find in order to make it" obvious but very true. The second is "You need to trust and believe in the detector you are using". Negative attitudes and vibes will for some strange reason affect your detecting, it seems like detectors can almost sense this in our experience, but that's opinion and not scientifically based. So in short YES you will hopefully get a better machine for more money, but how it performs is very much due as always to you and of course those vital elements luck and fate

### **DOES AN EXPENSIVE MACHINE MEAN I WILL FIND MORE OR BETTER THINGS?**

As above yes it can result in more finds but it or you have little control on quality of finds it will make. Don't expect too much, the machine you use will find you various metal objects it will not discriminate against corroded from finer quality finds. The fact that you may find more will be influenced by the greater abilities of top range machines. Primarily this can be measured in discrimination formats and the ability to search deeper down into the soils as well as their ability in most cases to have interchangeable search coils.

### **WHAT ARE THIS DEPTH AND DISCRIMINATION I KEEP HEARING ABOUT?**

Depth is literally the ability of a machine to say find an object at a given vertical measurement in the soil. Say for example one machine can find a silver sixpence at 6 to 8 inches another may be able to locate it at 8 to 10 inches. Discrimination is the ability of a detector to screen out or include metals. Non-ferrous metals are normally the desired elements and iron is not. However if you were searching an ancient battle field you would also want to find iron for arrow heads and spear tips so your discrimination would be set very low or perhaps turned off totally. Turn the discrimination totally off and you will find normally that the detector will find any metal objects dependant of course on their size. Again there are a lot of variables to consider here especially with depth. For example if you search a field that is very dry, metals like lead and copper seem to be readily detected and but not at very good depths. In fact dry soil is noticeably inferior to moist soils in target location and therefore availability. On dry soil detector interference between the machine you are using and those of others will noticeably increase in most cases. However return to the same field when the soil has a higher

moisture level and you will certainly notice the difference. The size of the buried object also is a variable to be considered. If its huge say a deep freeze buried at 5 feet down then almost all detectors will locate it. The difference between detectors is their ability to locate smaller targets at better depths

### **WHAT IS THE BEST DETECTOR I CAN BUY?**

Now that is a really difficult question. Some may say there is no answer. There are some superb and stunning performance detectors on the market right now. But what you need to remember are the three factors you deserve as a purchaser. (1) Top controls options and performance (2) high standards of build quality (3) good ergonomics and comfort in use. I of course have my personal opinions on which are the best, but I had to establish this for myself and cannot share that point of view here as my opinions may simply be totally at odds with what you think or require. Everyone has their own opinions on what the best machine is, usually related to which machine has found them the best things, but that does not apply to anyone else's situation. But please do remember our old friends luck and fate

### **CAN I BUY AN EXPENSIVE MACHINE TO START?**

Of course you can as stated above, but there may be pitfalls. Do not buy it to look smart or because you feel you have to. Hopefully you will have tried and tested it a bit before you buy and purchase it because you know its right for you and you believe in its abilities and because it's you that wants it and not someone else's opinion that has forced you. Undoubtedly some people will rush in buy the best and then become highly successful detectorists that's the law of averages. But there may also be a few who give up detecting entirely all because they purchased a far too sophisticated detector without appreciating the basics first. Had they waited for a year and used a more basic model then all may have been then ok. Like everything in life it's you that must make the decisions that are most appropriate for you, and then bear the successes or failures that come your way as a result. However in metal detection sheer determination will always bring rewards sooner or later.

### **SOMEBODY SAYS THEY HAVE A TOP MACHINE AND THAT I SHOULD GET ONE TOO?**

This comment is often made by someone who is doing really well with a certain model or type of detector, but it can be based on over enthusiasm. Whilst they are doing well which is brilliant, there is absolutely no guarantee that you will. However if you have used their model of machine on varied sites and have achieved good results yourself that make you personally believe such an outlay would be a good investment then go ahead.

### **I HAVE HAD HEART / BACK PROBLEMS CAN I STILL DETECT?**

Please consult your GP on levels of physical activity that are not suitable for your condition. Please also refer to any research work undertaken that on the effects of a metal detector on a Pacemaker. Back problems dependant on their nature are usually quite restrictive conditions please again consult a GP for any advice and tell them what metal detecting involves. At the end of the day only you yourself truly know in the case of back problems what as an individual you are capable of.

### **MY FRIEND HAS A USED MACHINE AND SAYS IT WOULD BE GREAT FOR ME SHOULD I BUY IT?**

Mostly this is OK if you know what you are buying and have checked the price asked for against its age and condition. Has your friend always treated the detector with respect? is it clean and well cared for?. What guarantees are they offering or is it "sold as seen". If this is a back up machine for you, then to some degree you can take a risk. If it's perhaps your first machine consider carefully, would it be better to buy brand new and have all the associated repair warranties. If in doubt in any way at all don't buy it and politely refuse their offer. As in all cases the choice is yours but perhaps always consider "Buyer Beware"

### **WHERE DO I GET A METAL DETECTOR FROM?**

Where possible always try to purchase brand new or second hand from an authorised metal detector retailer or dealer. That way you know its new or has been looked after, you have warranty`s and are protected under various consumer based legislation against faulty goods etc. However it`s also worth emphasising the fact that many authorised dealers now hold good stock levels of both brand new models as well as second hand machines that also come with warranties.

### **OK IVE GOT MY NEW MACHINE NOW.**

If this is your first ever experience of a metal detector then the following may assist in avoiding disappointment later. Unpack the machine and layout all the parts, the Instruction Manual should have a page that shows you everything that should be included or at least a listing of the parts. Please do refer to the Assembly Section this will show you precisely how it is assembled and avoids forcing together of un-associated parts that may cause structural weakness or damage. Check each part as you assemble to ensure there are no splits or cracks. It is totally unfair to expect Manufacturing Quality Control to be 100% infallible for eternity so do your own checks as well. If anything looks suspect please phone the retailer they will not mind, and there is always the remote chance that you may have located a serial production fault. Although I have never heard of such a fault occurring doesn`t mean it never will. Ensure batteries are inserted with correct polarities as in Instruction Manual and you should be ready to turn on your new machine.

### **OK IVE GOT MY NEW DETECTOR I WANT TO GO STRAIGHT OUT AND TRY IT?**

Again nothing wrong with doing that. However if you are a total new starter we would recommend that you spend an hour or two reading the Instruction Manual, especially when assembling your new purchase. With that done I know the eagerness to get out and find. However consider a few hours in the garden, testing with a range of differing metals and shaped targets. This way you will understand the different responses each gives. I know it`s stifling that urge to get out, but getting to know your new machine before getting out in the field can have many advantages and may save you a lot of time digging rubbish. One thing I did when I was a newcomer is to take the Instruction Manual out with you for as long as you need. When I start to use a new model detector I still do this, after 35 years detecting so no one will think any the worse if you stop and consult your manual. We all have different ways of learning and differing abilities.

### **IS JOINING A CLUB SOMETHING WORTH DOING?**

If you enjoy talking about your finds then what could be better than sitting chatting to 20 or 30 like minded people? Sounds like heaven to me. Clubs are long established in the UK and usually have a waiting list for membership. Members vary from very knowledgeable people to recent starters and no matter what once you are a member any club will go out of their way to make you feel valued and comfortable. As a new starter to mix with far more experienced detectorists will be highly beneficial to you, a club is a mine of information always ready to be tapped.

### **WHATS THE BEST POSTURE METHOD FOR SEARCHING**

There are two postures here one for you and one for the detector. For walking keeping a straight back and for digging squatting or crouching comply according to recent manual handling etc techniques are the best option. Your detector should be held in a position comfortable for you and should be possible to be adjusted to achieve this. When detecting always remember to keep the search coil as close to the ground surface as possible. The most common problem one sees all too evidently is people who swing their detectors too fast and far too high. I once saw a gentleman at a rally that swung with his search coil over a foot above the ground. He was complaining that he hadn`t even had a signal for some 4 months now. I wasn`t surprised. It is worthy of note that prolonged detecting can become rather tiring on the old arms. To alleviate this there are items known as bungee harnesses which when set up reduce the weight of the detector by 80% or even more.

### **WHEN I SEARCH WHERE SHOULD THE COIL BE POSITIONED?**

As answer above. Ideally as close to the ground surface as possible. With rough and uneven ground reduce swing speed so that if or when coil does hit a hard piece of soil or building remains etc it is not damaged

### **SHOULD I TAKE SPARE BATTERIES OUT WITH ME?**

Very much dependant on how long you intend to search for. But in almost all cases the answer is **YES ALWAYS**. You may only have planned for two hours searching but have just started to find coins in a potentially promising area, so you stay longer and spare batteries may well soon be needed. Having them present gives you choice and independence. Many experienced detectorists can recall the times when they were just starting to find coins and artefacts and then pop their batteries ran out and they had no spares with them. This entails a journey for replacements or can totally wreck your day, especially if it's a long walk back to the car as well.

### **HOW DO I STORE MY METAL DETECTOR?**

OK this varies on the times of non-use the detector will experience. When we have been out for the day we clean our machines with a damp cloth ensure they are dry and then place them back in the carry bags leaving them unzipped. Unzipped allows for any accidental high level moisture to escape from the bag should it occur for any reason. We do not recommend storing a metal detector in an outside garage or similarly unheated building as the climatic weather variations can cause an excess build up of moisture which can damage your detector. Storing them in the house within a dry cupboard or similar place is the best option. If you are not going to be detecting for three weeks then it does no harm in this period to just turn your machine on for say five minutes to make sure all is fine. If you are not going to be detecting for longer periods we would advise that you remove the batteries totally without fail. Should batteries leak they can seriously damage your detector. Similarly when buying a machine form a non-authorized dealer or other source etc, please check the battery compartment for evidence of blue-white-green powdery crystal type deposits or thick clear or brownish viscous liquid. These are sure signs at some stage there has been a serious period of non-usage and neglect resulting in battery leakage.....DO NOT PURCHASE UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES!!

### **WHEN I GO OUT IS THE DETECTOR ALL I WILL NEED?**

I suppose logically that would seem to be all that is required. However you will also need a spade, or small trowel to dig with. Try to obtain one that is specifically designed metal detecting as the durability of cheap trowels from garden centres etc are usually not up to the task. Consider the terrain and weather for track shoe or wellington suitability; do not wear steel toe capped footwear, as your detector will pick these up. In warm or hot weather take a flask of water or juice with you. If you are going out for a long period then some sandwiches etc will be ideal. A simple first aid kit is also handy should you encounter the wrong end of a Hawthorn bush. It is also recommended that you use a pair of headphones. These promote signal clarity and also have the added advantage of extending your battery life. Now when it comes to headphones please don't use those cheap ones. You have just spent maybe several hundred pounds on your new detector, where is the logic in attaching a £2.99 pair of headphones to it? Retailers stock specially designed head phones for use with metal detectors. These have superior design and are more robust for the external weather use we are going to put them through. True these will cost a bit more but they are definitely worth the investment. A hat, sun glasses and lotion are definitely required if you are out in periods of prolonged sunlight exposure. If the weather is looking threatening taking a spare change of clothing might be a good idea, especially if you don't possess any water proofed clothing. This may all sound like a lot of extras to take out, but most detector retailers stock some very good bags with extra compartments and also compact back packs which are ideal.

**If you are on any type of medication such as Insulin etc make sure that you have adequate supplies for your daily prescribed dosage with you so that you can administer appropriately. It may be a good idea in such cases to add your medication to a regular list of things to take out for the day and just get into the habit of ticking off this list before you leave home.**

### **NOW IVE NOW GOT A DETECTOR CAN I GO ANYWHERE I WISH TO?**

Sadly no you can't. Everywhere in the UK is either owned or controlled by someone. You must always ensure that you have full up to date permission to be where you are metal detecting at all times. Activities such as metal detecting rallies will obviously have sorted these issues out for you but they are the exception

### **IS IT SAFE TO SEARCH LAND WHERE THERE IS LIVESTOCK PRESENT, OR HAS BEEN IN THE PAST?**

Yes with caution searching with your back to two ton rowdy stud bull isn't a good idea. Some young Heifers and Bullocks can also be extremely boisterous so be careful. Horses too can walk up behind you being inquisitive and have been known to step on the odd search coil when you turn round to pat them. Always close firmly shut any livestock gates that you find closed and have to open for access. Take a pack of medicated wipes out with you to clean your hands before eating after digging in soil. Pastureland where horses have been kept even if some time ago has been known to contain Anthrax and other nasties.

### **WHAT ABOUT BOMBS AND LIVE BULLETS?**

If in any doubt whatsoever do not touch anything that looks like it could be ordnance. Carefully mark the item and inform the police and the land owner. It is rare that large bombs are located by general detectorists as most often these are deeply buried. However hand grenades, incendiary bombs and live bullets are frequently unearthed most derive from the Second World War and can on occasion be unstable. It's best to leave such well alone. In some cases it may be necessary for EOD Bomb Disposal to attend a scene but fortunately such incidents are rare.

### **WHAT IF I DISCOVER HUMAN REMAINS?**

These could be from a wide variety of sources from an actual recent body to bone fragments thousands of years old. In all cases the police, landowner, County archaeologists and Coroner will or may need to be informed. Common occurrences are bone fragments from ancient cemeteries and to a lesser degree deriving from Second World War aircraft crashes where the crew or some of them failed to vacate the stricken aircraft. If you think it's Human it probably is, but take time to assess from a distance as some large carcasses of animals such as Fallow Deer can look like Human remains under certain circumstances

### **I'LL NEVER FIND ANYTHING WILL I?**

Have confidence in both yourself and the detector that you are using. You will definitely find things that's guaranteed, but just what they will be is as always dictated by a wide variety of possibilities. Some of these you can influence to a certain degree but never totally control the unpredictability which is again one of the exciting factors about metal detecting.

### **WASNT IT ALL FOUND AND DUG UP IN THE 1970`S?**

A commonly held and actually false belief. It is true that there were many detectorists in the 1970`s but they didn't find everything. Some great finds were made because nowhere had been subjected to a metallic object based search before; the technology was simply not available. Some of the sites back then are still searched today. Of course the largest finds have mostly been found on these now, but still good finds are made after 40 years. When you find a site of course every target and object you remove be it coins or brooches etc then that's less for you to find on your next visit. However ploughing and other activities including earthworm actions can help to renew such sites. But sooner or later finds will become scarcer and you may have to put in a longer time to search. Just think of the technology available back in the 1970`s they could not possibly have found everything. Today's technology is far more advanced and goes much deeper than anything from the 1970`s

### **HOW DO I GET PERMISSION?**

Once again there are numerous angles of approach for this. Informing friends and work colleagues that you are interested in metal detecting can be a real good start. Sooner or later a request for a lost wedding ring will come your way and perhaps after finding it you can stay and look for other finds. Creating awareness of your interest is very important. You can try writing to or phoning local farmers and land owners or even visiting them. If you are visiting try and avoid Sundays and peak harvest time when such people are either having a break or very busy. Basically you have to ask someone to give you permission, so think about how you are going to approach this. Often it can help to have done some research into the history of the area, so you can talk to them about this. There is no guaranteed method of approach and when you receive a rejection don't be off put keep on trying. Alternatively see if there are any local archaeological digs that may need a detectorist to help search spoil heaps or a new building site may have potential. Much successful permission seeking is common sense. A farmer over two days had separate incidents involving people ask him for permission to detect. The first a reasonably well dressed man walked up and introduced himself along with a file on local history. He knew a little about crops and agriculture and brought some finds from other areas to show the farmer. He also explained that he knew about recording all his finds and showed the farmer documents to support this. He commented on the weather and asked the farmer how this was affecting his crops, also mentioning the large number of Pheasants he had seen. All polite informative general chat topics. The second man arrived at Sunday lunchtime. He drove very fast down the gravel track and stopped in full view of the dining family. He peered in through the window and looked at them. The farmer got up and went to the door whereupon the man greeted him with "Hi there Ok matey I've just got myself one of those metal detectors and thought I would like to give it a go all over your land. So come on mate how about it? Can I have permission? Some of my mates said they would like to come with me too when they can make it". Common sense should lead to no wondering about who got the permission here and who didn't I think

#### **WHAT ABOUT USING GOOGLE EARTH AND THE INTERNET TO FIND SITES.**

Google Earth is an invaluable source to the detectorist for locating potential sites. The time shift icon allows you to examine photos of areas over the last few years and in some areas of UK it goes back to 1945. It can reveal Celtic, Roman, Saxon, Mediaeval and a whole host of sites from all ages. Using a combination of Internet and Google Earth is the best. This is illustrated by the fact that once I found a field with some curious circular markings in them. Thinking that they were Bronze Age Barrows or Celtic Round Houses I believed I had found a site of some potential. However a day later when researching the area's history on some websites exactly where these circular markings were I discovered had been a World War Two Searchlight station. So the markings were 70 not 2070 years old. One of the best things is to look on Google Earth at known villa and settlement sites see how sometimes they consist of just a dark patch of crop growth. Familiarise yourself with such markings and you can soon be finding an investigating your own. Look for unusually shaped woodlands as these may be hiding a moated settlement site. Look at old track ways that still exist or the crop marks of those that don't, see where they lead, examine areas where such track ways cross each other. Even if you can't see any traces of the settlements they will certainly be nearby. Look for tracks that just branch off from other major route ways. These may lead you to a lost village or Roman Villa. Of course there are pitfalls with aerial interpretation such as: where gamekeepers place their pheasant rearing pens and then move them this can leave building like markings on meadowland. Where farmers make spillages of fertiliser can also make large areas of darker crop growth that could be very misleading. Where a manure pile has been left for a few years and then removed will leave an area where extra development of crops will occur. Deer tracks across cropped fields from the air can look like archaeological crop markings, as can where the farmer drives his tractor just after harvest time. Pylons or telegraph poles viewed from high altitude can create strange patterns due to grass growth at their bases. So on Google Earth descend as low as possible and you should in many cases be able to see their shadows which then gives the game away. Once you have found sites of suspected good potential you can now seek the permission to search them. Perhaps taking a print off of the site to show the owner.

#### **ANOTHER DETECTORIST TOLD ME THAT THE LAND I HAVE JUST GOT PERMISSION TO SEARCH ON IS ALL WORKED OUT, IS IT STILL WORTH GOING?**

Absolutely. This statement makes about as much sense as the “it was all found in the 1970`s” comment. Anyway if you are a new starter or new to the area it will have its own novelty value especially for you. It will be the first time you search that area and so you will take along a vital element positive enthusiasm. It is impossible for a site to have been totally cleared of all its metallic finds, unless of course it has been built over. In which case the finds remain locked beneath the buildings waiting for someone to find them in the future. We have been searching some sites for nearly three decades and several of them can still yield a healthy ratio of coins and artefacts.

### **WHAT SORT OF AGREEMENTS NEED TO BE MADE WITH LANDOWNERS.**

The landowner will undoubtedly brief you on areas that you may or may not go on as well as any Countryside Code or Scheduled Ancient Monuments issues that may be involved. However preferably before you commence searching it is of the utmost importance to make an agreement concerning what happens if you are lucky enough to find an item considered as valuable or indeed as treasure. Once drafted and signed by all parties concerned it is a legally binding document. The most common and indeed most fair agreement is one that states in the event of such a find the landowner and detectorist will share a fifty fifty divide of any monies or rewards involved. Examples of agreements that can be used are easily found on the Internet.

### **WHO NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT WHAT I FIND?**

Firstly the landowner who has kindly given you permission to search must be informed and shown everything that you discover. He may wish to keep several or all of your finds for his personal collection and that is of course his right and prerogative to do so. Saying that I have never experienced a landowner who wishes to keep everything. Of course you can inform anyone else that you wish about your finds, however please note that the land owner may not want the precise locations to be revealed to anyone so do be careful here. Don't tell too many people exactly where you are finding these things, after all it was you who worked hard to locate them, and got the permission to do so, which could easily be revoked. If such information got into the hands of the wrong people, such as Nighthawks (people who illegally search at night) you could well find your sites destroyed, the finds you would have recorded could be stolen by someone and you end up losing permission due to all the damage. In this situation everyone loses. There is the Portable Antiquities Scheme in England which is an excellent mechanism for the voluntary reporting of all your finds. Obviously this has clearly defined advantages as all finds feature on their website and are available for distribution studies and types of objects and coins located. Basically it provides a massive resource for research. Finds can be shown or loaned to the representative of PAS who is termed as a Finds Liaison Officer (FLO) who will record them. Alternatively there are several other sources for the voluntary recording of your finds, chiefly UKDFD whose website hosts are amongst the most knowledgeable people available on UK based metal detecting finds. There are some finds of course where both you and the landowner cannot exercise rights of ownership until they have been assessed and these are finds that are the ones classed under The Treasure Act 1996. In simple terms if you find a solitary gold coin then you both can decide who keeps or sells the find. Should you find two gold coins then these should be declared as treasure they can be handed to the police, local museum curator or FLO for correct processing. Objects with more than 10% precious metal content (i.e. silver or gold etc) and which are or are suspected to be over 300 years old must also be declared as potential treasure. Remember when handing anything to be so processed, to get a receipt and always where possible take a series of high definition photographs of the object. Sadly some items so declared have been lost in the system and having a receipt and quality images will certainly assist you should you wish to make a claim for any losses and avoids any potentially incorrect claims or worse denials. Once the coin or artefact has been processed if it's not treasure it will be returned to you and the landowner for appropriate retention or sale as per your agreement. Even if it is treasure sometimes it may be disclaimed and returned back to you. Examples of this would be items that cannot be dated positively, or items unwanted by any museums and items of a very common nature of which there are lots of examples available. If deemed treasure under the terms of the Act then what is deemed as the full market value would be given as a reward to be divided as per agreement with landowner and any other colleagues. The determination of just what something is worth can be a very complex issue and has often been the catalyst for

intense disagreements between detectorists and the Treasure Valuation Committee. Normally you can of course seek to legally dispute any proposed rewards if it was felt they were unjustified in their amount. However it is always best to seek at least two independent valuations beforehand which can be used as evidence, combined with your high quality photographs of course. Antiquities dealers or main line auction houses will complete valuations for you sometimes for free or for a nominal fee.

**Please note:-This is a very simplistic account of finding treasure and its complexities, please consult the Internet or perhaps an experienced detectorist for greater details of issues pursuant to the Treasure Act 1996. If in doubt always seek advice as quickly as possible**

### **TAKING A CAMERA OR GPS EQUIPMENT OUT WITH YOU.**

If you can this always a good idea, imagine finding that hoard and you have no camera to photograph the early stages of the find. Photographs of finds taken out in the field can serve as good comparisons for when you have finally cleaned and conserved your finds. Photographs are a good way of recording areas that you have visited, and in periods of non-detecting can be a great way to recall treasured memories of great days out when you made those superb finds. They also serve to keep a record of your activities that can be shown to other interested parties. GPS equipment has come down in price recently and there are some good units available on the market. They are superb mechanism for accurately recording where you made that superb find for future reference or plotting scatters of coins and artefacts to show distribution patterns.

### **FINDING A SITE TO SEARCH.**

This will depend on many things such as what you are looking for. The information below is only generally specific and relates to inland searching. Some people will elect to search beaches and some a combination of inland and beaches. Whatever items you are interested in they will normally always have been due to some human activity (unless its naturally occurring gold nuggets you are after). Human settlement always leaves traces for the inquisitive to pick up on. Don't worry many of these traces you will find with the acquisition of experience, but here we can at least give you a start in the right direction. It is possible to some degree to enhance the possibilities of finding specific things you are interested in. For example if you are fascinated with railway memorabilia old track routes and station sites would be your target areas. If it was World War Two aircraft pieces then the site of a deserted aerodrome would be high up on your desirability list. If it's just coins of any age then picnic sites, corners of fields where farm workers rested, fairground sites, market sites and even stiles would all be worthy of your attention.

Ok at this point I am going to give you a fictitious ancient site of a lost large Roman settlement and show you some of ways you could use to locate it. Many of the factors will apply to a wide variety of settlement sites from all ages, whilst some are more site specific

Some two thousand years ago a young man called Pretutus stood on a neighbouring area of raised ground and looked at the large settlement, its houses, shops, gardens, animal enclosures. There were people everywhere, visiting traders young children running about, couples, births and deaths all mixed in with moderate luxury as well as smoke and noise of leather tanning and iron smelting. Looking at all this Pretutus thought "this is so large and so established it will surely last forever". Nearly twenty decades later it is clear that Pretutus was very wrong, you are now standing where he stood and a huge expanse of arable land stands before you. It appears not a single clue or piece of evidence remains of this once large settlement. Well to the naked eye looking horizontally from some distance away this can appear to be certainly true. So how might you go about looking to find just such a site for yourself? There is probably no hard and fast sequence of rules to this so I will outline the order of how it was that I found just such a settlement. Also included will be other associated factors that will hopefully create awareness of just how much a detective you can look forward to becoming. When taking up metal detecting you will be embarking on what can be a long and extremely fruitful mission of achievement.

I had previously used Google Earth to examine an area I was very interested in; it consisted of some low lying hills and flat fields adjacent to a river. Water proximity always being a prerequisite for settlements until quite recently when it was able to be piped everywhere. On Google Earth I had used the time shift icon to have a look at the photographic history of the area back to the year 2000. This was useful for the last five years no field in this area showed any sign of crop marks relating to possible settlement. Then on the 2004 aerial view in one large field I could clearly see numerous square, round and thread like markings looking like spaghetti. Absolutely fantastic and just what I was looking for. The site also appeared to extend considerably into a neighbouring meadow although the markings were not so defined but not everyone has Google Earth, no matter, although for me this speeded things up, we would almost certainly have found the site sooner or later anyway.

I already had permission for this huge estate so I need not embark on looking for permission, out of courtesy I simply let Tim the farmer know I would be about. This ensured he could tell me if there was a shoot or any other activity I should be aware of and if it was convenient for me to pop over. Arriving we parked in the lay-bye and looked out across the field it was full of a six inch high green wheat crop. In some areas in the right light it looked darker and in other areas were patches of taller crop growth that appeared to be in lines and circles. I would have to wait before any detecting could be done here at least until after the forthcoming harvest. However there were still a few things I could do right now to assess what might be hidden away here. I took a walk around the field and noticed some rabbit burrows in one corner. Closer inspection of the soil cast out from these revealed two fragments of Roman tile, and Oyster and even a small green crusty corroded Roman coin. Ok now we are in business I thought. Carefully bagging up my evidence I carried on around the field edge picking up three more Oysters. Alongside this field there was a small water filled drainage ditch this was always full of water. However in some areas the banks had fallen in and these revealed fragments of grey ware pottery and a shard of Samian ware. Looking at the gravelly base of this ditch also revealed more pottery and a huge number of cow and horse bones. So far things looked very promising. The next field was meadowland and I knew that the potential settlement extended far out across this too. As I peered through the hedge I noticed an abundance of molehills. When inspecting these many could be seen to contain decayed plaster, tile and oyster fragments. The molehills seemed to follow the shape of the settlement, clustering up densely in some areas. Later I considered this and came to the conclusion that with all the sewage, food and animal waste from a settlement over many years this would enrich the soil. So the soil thus enriched had a higher level of earthworms and so the area had a higher ratio of moles that feasted on these worms. If you see regular flocks of birds on fields where the crops are already growing these can be good places to investigate, as these birds often stop on such areas for the same reason as the moles. But don't go too soon after harvest as you may discover your interesting site is no more than some spilled cereal grains the birds are eating. I decided to wait until after harvest and further wait until the field had been harrowed. This enabled me to examine through the layer of chaff and stubble. Well it was a good result and the site yielded many Roman coins and some stunning artefacts. One of these was a beautiful enamelled Roman votive altar. The wait had also allowed me to assess some other factors. For example it was quite clear even from a distance, that the field had several very large dark coloured areas in its chalky loam like soil. These alone would have stimulated my interest to detect there as would any change in the normal soil coloration on any field. I also noticed that a flock of crows and Peewit's that seemed to mainly feed on these areas of discoloration. Walking to the edge of the field where one of the dark areas extended I examined the soil. It was absolutely full of chalk fragments pottery, tile pieces and thousands of various coloured pottery fragments along with lots of oyster shells. Using a pair of binoculars I could save time and scan the field, using these clearly showed large areas of concentrated stones and tile scatters. That was enough for me I had all the evidence I needed. So it can be useful to return to a field at several stages of the year if you think it's of interest. Next to this field was a small copse that had a copious growth of Ground Elder and nettles growing there. Both species can be indicative of settlement refuse dumps more often than not from the Victorian period and can be worth checking if one of your collective passions involves bottle digging for example. Over the far side of the lane is a disused chalk pit shallow in depth nowadays but still enough to view the top and subsoil layers on the upper parts of its sides. Chalk pits can be good indicators of soil types and also can reveal sign such as grave cuts, refuse pits and a whole host of other settlement indicators. In this particular one there is a Roman period refuse pit and you can see all the layers of deposition stuffed full of pig bones and pottery pieces. In being a site

finding detective you should try and use all the clues that the land can give you. Sometimes this may be easy at other times it's all about waiting until conditions are right. You will be surprised at just how quickly you gain this knowledge and you never seem to forget it. One thing that sticks in my mind is the time when I found a small village whose church was actually a mile outside its boundaries. Very puzzling I thought and later research told me that the village had been seriously affected by the Plague. This had decimated so many villagers that it had been decided to relocate the village to an adjacent site. I also noticed that the fields around the old church were all arable fields. Since the church was the cultural and social centre of many an old village it was a good bet to assume that these fields were once where the original village had been situated. Over one hundred hammered silver coins, mediaeval heraldic pendants finger rings seems to prove the theory correct. Google Earth also helped as it showed a darker patch of soil extending for some distance all around the church. Field walking also found early green glazed pottery, tiles oysters and hundreds of cobble stones. As you can see it's the close association of other signs that can lead you to discovering metallic finds and if you use these clues properly you will increase your chances of success. Of course some exceptional finds are also made in areas that appear to have no clues at all, that's just the way things go. However we can also learn from this aspect in that we should never dismiss a site.

### **STRANGE THINGS ABOUT SITES.**

As we are aware the more you find in most cases leads to a steady decline in finds rate, unless you have a veritably stuffed site which some of us are lucky enough to find. It is often a fact that hoards and other great finds have been made on that small horrid field that you have been putting off searching for years. There is also a fickle element in this hobby. A classic example being this very unappealing looking field that for some reason we had not wanted to do. One year it was still stubble and was the only area that was available and so we were forced to detect on it. Now within minutes we had mediaeval seal matrices, heraldic mounts and pendants, weights ring brooches, hammered coins, belt fittings and buckles. It was absolutely crammed with mediaeval finds and we all joked about how ironic this factor was. Now a few weeks later it was deep ploughed and harrowed, we were really excited "just imagine what lovely finds will have been brought up now" we all thought. Well strangely very little at all was found in fact two large buckles was about it, and a few desultory bits of lead, what on earth had happened to our new site? Next year same thing happened we hit the stubble we hit the deep plough we hit the harrow hardly a thing. The year after numerous delightful finds were made by all of us again. Undoubtedly weather, attitude, moisture and a whole host of other factors were involved here. But imagine we had arrived on this site in one of the barren years; we could have been under the impression that it was a very poor site, when in fact it was crammed with good finds. Never dismiss a field until you have searched it for at least four to five seasons, then if nothing much is found you can safely consider it is rather bleak and perhaps consider striking it from your search areas. You will often hear experienced detectorists making comments like "strange isn't it? One year that field produces loads of good finds the next year hardly a thing at all"

### **WHAT IS THIS X FACTOR PEOPLE KEEP TALKING ABOUT**

In fact we detectorists were using this phrase long before the popular TV show came into being and undoubtedly people were using it ages before we started to. In detecting terms this so called X Factor falls into two primary aspects, make of them what you will.

(1) Whilst detecting in a field you get this feeling "Go over to your left just a few feet more, go on it will be worth it, a good find lies there. Just out in front of you now" and lo and behold you get a signal. The signal turns into a beautiful hammered silver groat coin and you are gobsmacked. Do you tell the others, will they think you have lost your marbles?

(2) You read a book and see a find you would really like to make, or you are talking to your colleagues about finds you would like to make. For some reason the conversation steers to a particular coin or artefact and seems to settle on that one desire. Days later you are out in the fields and that so desired find is now in your hand. How weird is that? Or were you one of those people who kept their thoughts to themselves and now discover that you have that very thought in your hand, bet you wished you had said it out loud now eh?

Whatever you make of these, they do seem to genuinely occur at a frequent rate. Statistically of course such things are bound to occasionally occur. However I believe it is some type of unknown association aspect of science very much untapped not understood and hardly appreciated, similar to the positive thoughts and you will find, negative thoughts you won't type of emotion. Whatever I don't understand such complexities. But like many things if you have found that they have happened and work for you then don't ignore such feelings as you just never know.

This Beginners Guide represents that of the author and not that of Joan Allen Electronics. The author takes full responsibility for the information presented.