

Field Test Fisher F44

As fate would decree, my recent detector tests always seem to have been carried out in rather damp conditions. On this occasion, although the weather again seemed to be against me, the conditions were actually in my favour as I will explain later.

The month of April was one of sunshine and showers and, in truth, I had expected no less. On several occasions I had been out in the field, on what would seem to be a lovely day, only to be caught in a random downpour that sent me running for cover. These showers, though, were over almost as soon as they had begun. However, such downpours were an ideal test for the most interesting feature of the new Fisher F22 and F44 models given that they are weatherproof (or perhaps aptly for the UK, shower and full-on monsoon proof).

The weatherproof feature intrigued me, so I decided (much to the dismay of my wife) to conduct a small experiment with the F44 (but not the F22). Therefore the F44 lived in my shower for two weeks (apart from when my wife removed it). Not only was this a good test of its shower-proof ability, but also of how it coped with humidity.

Previously I have had units fail on me after getting wet. The detectors were still working fine when put in the boot of my car, but on getting home I found that moisture had made its way into the unit and fogged up its display. It was nothing that a screwdriver, an uncooked pack of 'boil in the bag' rice, and an airing cupboard wouldn't fix. However, the potential moisture problem could have been a show-stopper if left to fester.

I have to say that my 'shower experiment' really was an acid test for the machine. I am pleased to say that the F44 passed it to a standard above and beyond what any owner could expect from a low end priced unit. I was pleasantly surprised that the detector was fully functional after its ordeal. All I need now is a set of fully waterproof headphones and I will be bed-ridden with pneumonia in no time!

As with the F22, the F44 model only requires two AA batteries to operate. This factor has appeal in that it enables a quick and easy battery change in the field. These two small batteries cost half the price of the normal batteries that I use on my main machine, and make for an even lighter



Fig.1. The sceat field.

and well-balanced unit. The F44 weighs in at an impressively light 1.04kg. To put it another way, it means that you will be carrying and using the equivalent of two cans of baked beans and a small kiwi fruit! This is less than half the weight of some high end machines, and means it's a detector you can swing all day.

The main difference visually between this and its little brother the F22, is the larger 11 inch teardrop shape (triangulated concentric elliptical) coil. As with the smaller version, this gives a good recovery speed due to the shape, pushing the search area beneath the coil to a shaper 'blade' of detection. This makes for a faster recovery when you encounter iron near to a good non-ferrous signal. However, the larger coil leads me to think that the F44 might be deeper seeking than the F22, as well as clearly covering a wider search area.

Field Test

My first afternoon out with the F44 was with my father-in-law; it was also his first ever detecting trip. I had chosen a field that was on high ground and away from the rivers in the area. I know this site as the 'sceat field' (Fig.1) as my good friend 'Philthy Phil' pulled his first sceat out of it within minutes of getting out of the car. If you haven't experienced it yourself, the 'sceat dance' is truly something to behold!

After 10 minutes I had unboxed

and assembled the machine, and it was 'coil to the soil'. At this point I noticed, or rather smelled, that the farmer had appeared in the corner of the field and was proceeding to spray liquid organic fertiliser onto it.

We cracked on as clearly we now had a time limit. The first signal that wasn't foil was a small pistol ball or heavy game shot, quickly followed – as I progressed across the side of a small hill – by several more; this was an old target practice area maybe?

I noticed the tractor approaching and stood well to the side. The farmer waved and laughed as he drove past and got the customary nod and 'stinky' hand waving signal. I continued on across and down the hill towards where I had enjoyed some success before, leaving my father-in-law to continue along the summit of the hill.

Next up came a Victorian bun head penny with a lovely green patina. This was unearthed from the field margin right next to a single track road.

As the next hour or two progressed I notched up a few more targets at respectable depths, including modern coinage, a watch winder, and a couple of buckles (Fig.2). The final target, before I decided that I didn't want to wander through the fertiliser, came as a nice surprise. It was a Roman coin with what looked to have traces of silvering (Fig.3). Most people would call this coin a 'grot'; however, for



Fig.2. Finds from the first day of testing the Fisher F44.



Fig.3. A corroded Roman coin.

Fig.4. Some buttons and other bits from my first search.

consigning them to the bin or scrap bucket. In fact, there were actually two lessons learned here. The scrappy looking piece of metal that seemed to be a part of an aluminium can (shown at the bottom of Fig.4) turned out to have a hallmark on it. It was actually silver, and my find is shown enlarged in Fig.7. I suspected from the oxidation of the metal at the time that it could be something more than aluminium, and such proved to be the case.

Summary

In summing up the F44 (and the new Fisher F series as a whole) I would have to say that I am impressed with them, especially at the entry level price of these units. Even the higher spec F44 comes in at well below the price that many would expect to pay for a mid range detector.

The features it boasts are also impressive, considering that I have many of them on my more expensive main detector. These include: ground grab and ground balance (as well as manual balance); adjustable audio tones; notch capability; pre-set programmes for coins, relics and jewellery; and a custom setting. I used the latter myself and found it both intuitive and effective.

Combine these programming features with the physical features of lightness in weight, weather proofing, and the fact it only needs two AA batteries to operate, and I believe Fisher is on to a winner. The F44 should appeal to anyone looking for a lower end starter machine, but also right up to those moving on to something in the mid range.

I will definitely be using the F44 as a very capable back-up machine. In fact, in some cases it might replace my main detector on some searches, as the teardrop shaped coil provides very good positive target response on my more contaminated sites.

Finally I would like to thank my good friends at Joan Allen who were kind enough to send me an F44 unit to finish off my field testing of the new Fisher F series.

As you will see within the pages of *Treasure Hunting* magazine, the Fisher F series detectors are distributed by Joan Allen Metal Detectors. I believe this company's customer service to be excellent, and I am sure their knowledgeable and friendly staff would be more than happy to answer any questions you might have on the F44. TH



Figs.5a & b. Victorian Diamond Jubilee of 1897 medallion.

Figs.6a & b. Tiny 17th century trade token.



Fig.7. A crumpled piece of silver, initially thought to be aluminium.



Among all the junk, though, I found a lot of buttons. Some of these tell the story of a local rail network, as well as the military presence in the area. All my finds are shown in Fig.4. One impressive and rather nice find that also came up here was a Victorian commemorative medallion celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of 1897 (Figs.5a & b).

Later on, working my way through a myriad of buttons and other bits, I noticed that one of my finds was actually a tiny 17th century trade token (Figs.6a & b). I managed to identify it via the Portable Antiquities Scheme website. It is an example of a trade token issued by George Stanton of Blewbury c.1660. I also managed to locate it on the British Farthings website, which describes this variant as a rare type showing a shield with a facing queen representing the Mercers Arms (a mercer being a trader in textiles or mercery).

It just goes to show that you should look through all those buttons and bits at the bottom of your finds bag before

me it puts yet another pin in the timeline of this particular location.

The next foray out and about was much closer to my home. It was on one of my very first permissions and was a pasture field near to a railway. I hadn't searched it for a long time, and had progressed through many different detectors since my last visit.

However, I was amazed by what I had missed, so perhaps technology has really moved on. I seem to remember that I was put off this field by all of the trash that I found: a lot of iron, hot rocks, tin cans, and the obligatory ring pulls.

Naturally, I also found a lot of ring pulls and cans on this visit; but you just have to dig them as you never know what they could be concealing.