

Field Test Minelab Pro-Find 35

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Minelab have really been on top of their game recently with the introduction at the Detectival rally in September of their new Equinox detector and the Pro-Find 35 and Pro-Find 15 pinpointers. I was lucky enough to receive a Pro-Find 35 for the purpose of testing (Fig.1) and have consequently been out and about with it over the last few weeks.

Features and Technical Specification

- Ferrous tone ID
- Waterproof to 3 metres (10 feet)
- Audio and vibration response
- Adjustable sensitivity (5 levels)
- 9 volt battery supplied
- Battery life: 30 hours (sensitivity level 3)
- Low battery indication
- Belt attachable holster
- Lanyard
- LED flashlight
- Probe side sensitivity
- Length: 9.3 inches (24cm)
- Weight: 6.8oz (193g)

Key Technologies:

- VLF, DIF (detector interference free)
- Lost alarm
- Factory reset
- Instruction pamphlet (in eight languages)
- Warranty: 24 months

DIF Technology

'DIF technology', or detector interference free technology, is a Minelab exclusive and works by disconnecting magnetic field of the pinpointer's coil when it is turned off. Therefore, DIF eliminates many of the false signals and noise caused by other pinpointers not having this functionality.

A pinpointer is large enough to generate its own circular currents when it passes through a detector coil's transmit field. This causes extraneous signals that the detector will sense. With DIF technology this is no longer a problem.

Build Quality

The Pro-Find 35 has a noticeably solid build and despite appearing very large, it

is in fact exactly the same size and weight as the older Pro-Find 25.

The power button, plus and minus buttons are neatly recessed into the body. The speaker is on the other side of the body whereas the Pro-Find 25 has both speaker and buttons on the same side. I'm not sure whether the 'engines' of the Pro-Find 35 and the Pro-Find 25 are the same, but suffice to say the 35 is certainly louder. It has got a larger speaker area which is waterproof.

The LED flashlight is not anywhere near as bright as that of the 25 and so consequently doesn't blind you when looking at it directly whereas the 25 most certainly does. The detecting tip is a solid black with the red Minelab logo etched onto it. Initially I thought it would fade away quickly, but despite persistent scraping action in stony soils and shingle beaches, it still looks as good as new. The main body has a bright yellow livery and so shouldn't get left behind – if it does, it has a lost alarm feature that will sound an alert for five minutes.

Bench Test

For the bench testing I stacked up several books and placed my ruler on top away from all metal. Using a £1 coin ('chubbie'), at full sensitivity of 5, the pinpointer gave a good signal at up to 2.7 inches from the coin. Having reduced the sensitivity to 1, it was easily getting the coin at 1.1 inches.

In the real world with ground minerals, it may not always be possible to run the Pro-Find 35 at full power. For best results and longer battery life I would recommend sensitivity 3 as a good all round setting. I then tested the ferrous



Fig.1. The box and contents.

tone feature – I'd say almost every detectorist would appreciate being able to recognise a coin from a nail in a hole!

I placed a 3 inch nail on the bench and a 5p coin and held the + button for around 5 seconds to turn on the ferrous tone ID. Pointing the 35 at the coin I got a clear solid beep while the nail gave off an interrupted erratic sounding response, reminiscent of the sound a smoke detector makes and clearly different to the response from the coin. Going even further, I placed the coin touching the nail (Fig.2) and both sounds were clearly heard when the tip was brought next to each object: a beep and an interrupted beep. Results were the same using 'vibrate' only. These were good results and I was very impressed.



Fig.2. Coin and nail in the same hole.

Fig.3. A musket ball from stubble.



Out in the Field

The first day's tests were at a new site to me – an old market garden. I expected coins and the occasional bit of rubbish. I took along two detectors: a Minelab E-Trac, and a Garrett AT Max. I was cross-checking signals with the detectors and listening for any stray blipping that occurred but all was quiet, with just the occasional sound from the AT Max when the 35 was turned on. There were lots of targets – mainly aluminium junk and a few coins. Ironically I wasn't able to see how the ferrous tone worked because I didn't find any ferrous targets!

I moved to a different site and soon found some dodgy sounding signals. The E-Trac was good here because I could see the ferrous signals even if it didn't sound on them. So the 35 was used to verify a few signals that did give an interrupted tone and proved to be correct. Another dodgy signal sounded positive on the E-Trac and after removing a few inches of soil the 35 clearly indicated non-ferrous. When the nail eventually landed on the surface the 35 then gave the ferrous tone which was too late in this case, as I had already dug it out.

Ploughed and Stubble Fields

The results improved considerably on ploughed and stubble fields. Targets were plentiful and using a Minelab X-Terra 505 as my search device, I was able to identify both ferrous and non-ferrous targets alike (Fig.3). However, there were instances when my own judgement was called into doubt and I used the 35 as a back-up to properly identify what I was hearing. I found it powerful enough to scrape the surface and listen out for a response on shallow items. It is certainly sturdy enough for this and I didn't feel that it suffered any issues for not having a scraping edge. It was quite good at calling ferrous for several signals hidden from view in plough clods. It is quicker to give the ferrous tone if the target is bigger



Fig.4. The Minelab Pro-Find 35 shown underwater with a ring.

than a nail, say chestnut sized. When a few inches off a target it chirps, but when right on top it rises to a loud screech.

Beach and Salt Water Operation

Where the Pro-Find 35 really scored highly for me was its beach and salt water operational abilities.

It really was very good – I was initially taken aback by this, as I had been thinking that it might have been less efficient than in its inland use. I was pleasantly surprised – it never missed a beat even when fully submerged in rock pools with water temperatures as low as 13 degrees Celsius. I was able to range from full sensitivity to its lowest and back up again without overloading while fully submerged in cold seawater (Fig.4).

At one stage I dropped it into a rock pool and it got caught up in an incoming surging wave. It got carried out and back in again and after banging around on rocks it never missed a beat and stayed on! I was able to recover all the targets my E-Trac identified and in a few instances it gave the ferrous tone correctly on very small ferrous pieces. It didn't sound as loud at the beach as it did in an open field. If wearing headphones at the beach with crashing waves, the vibration aspect is very useful because you probably won't want to remove your headphones to listen to the probe on every signal. Similarly, if fully submerged the vibration is the best way to feel the signals.

Air Testing

I did a few air tests with a round part

of a ring pull, laying the 35 on the wet sand and I easily got more than 3 inches with it – considering it's a hollow item this was a surprise. That result bodes extremely well for finding rings. Naturally, it has got a greater sensitivity on larger items so if it becomes too noisy on a recovery just push the minus button to drop it down a notch. You can't instantly de-sensitise it by touching the side of a hole and pressing the power button because it will shut off, but the minus button will do that for you.

Conclusion

The Pro-Find 35 is a considerable improvement overall to Minelab's previous pinpointer offerings, and is now rightly there at the top of the range and performs as it should – both inland and around damp environments – to a greater degree than I had anticipated.

To answer the question, "Will it cut down on my ferrous recovery with the new ferrous tone feature?" It will, but with a caveat: is there a coin next to that ferrous sound? So be diligent with the audio from your detector. It can be loud – very loud when it goes into smoke alarm ferrous sound! So the vibration function is welcomed.

This pinpointer is fully waterproof, so paired with a waterproof detector you have a winning combination. The best thing is that after you have finished with it you can dip it in a stream or a rock pool or underneath a tap at home to wash it off. Having used a Pro-Find 25 for many years, the new technology of the 35 is very welcome indeed. TH