Field Test **Quest Q60**

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It only seems five minutes ago that I was fortunate to discover what a great machine the Quest Q30 is, one which, like many people, I still very much enjoy using. However a few months after testing the Q30, I received its big brother, the Quest Q60 (Fig.1) from Joan Allen Metal Detectors. Would this latest American designed and Chinese engineered machine from Quest be able to compete with other machines in its price range and be as good as the Q30 is?

Fig.1. The Quest Q60 multi-frequency detector.

Quest Q60 Specifications

Frequency: VLF 5 kHz, 14 kHz, 21 kHz manually selectable.
Audio Output: 15 level speaker / vibration / wire, wirefree headphones.
Headphones: Wirefree Pro headphones.
Smart Phone Compatibility: Built-in Bluetooth via QuestGO app (iOS and Android).
Adjustable Telescopic Shaft: Fast release cam-lock 2 sections, top aluminium bottom plastic with adjustable handle. Heights 80-130cm.
Waterproof: IP68 5 metres waterproof including control box.
Battery: Built-in 4000mAh rechargeable Li-Po battery for 10-18hrs from the magnetic USB connection.
Coil: 13 x 9 inch Beast X Waterproof Super Sport coil (interchangeable).
Display: Two levels LED back lights for low light conditions.
Metal ID: 99 metal I.D. levels.
Programs: Park / Field / Beach + Saltwater / Gold and Cache 5 detecting programs.
Ground Balance: Automatic (pump) or manually (selecting).
Target Identifications: 50 segments with masking, target ID selection, Threshold, Tones, Tone Space, Fesen, Frequency.
Weight: 1.2Kg (with coil).
Warranty: 2 years.

First Impressions

I was delighted to be asked to assess the Quest Q60, hereinafter for ease referred to as the Q60. Upon opening the box, the machine looked the same as the Q30, with its striking black and orange livery and identical square three-piece telescopic shaft (top aluminium and bottom plastic), with an adjustable handle and magnetic underside charging point. Also supplied are a pair of high quality and comfortable Quest Wirefree Pro headphones and a wireless adapter, if you wish to use your own headphones (Fig.2).

The machine came with a Quest pinpointer and of course, the Beast X 13 x 9 inch Super Sport coil, which I was looking forward to using with the multi-frequency option on the Q60. The multi-frequency option is different to that of the Minelab Equinox or Vanquish models. Rather than automatically determining the best frequency for the ground conditions whilst detecting, the Q60 is more similar to the XP Deus where the user changes between the 5, 14, and 21 kHz frequencies manually. Naturally, this requires a little more knowledge – to explain this to those new to the hobby, the higher the frequency (21 kHz, for example), the more the detector will be sensitive to tiny targets like hammered coins but will go shallower on medium / large targets in depth. The lower the frequency (5 kHz, for example), the more detection depth the detector will gain on large targets such as large coins such as a 'cartwheel' penny, but at the cost of a loss in sensitivity on small targets close to the surface. These differences may prove a little confusing and take a while to learn as a beginner, but very much worth mastering with your machine over time.

Fig.2. Q60 pack contents with Wirefree Pro headphones.

Fig.3. Out on Christmas Eve with the Q60.

Fig.4. A small lead fragment picked up at a good depth with the Q60.

First Day Out

With the Q60 fully charged and me now finished for the holidays, I headed out early on Christmas Eve morning (Fig.3) to a recently ploughed field on one of my permissions. I have detected this field many times with a wide variety of detectors and find it to be a very good initial test site. It has various soil conditions, from heavily saturated iron-infested areas, to where fetes and fairs were held in the early Victorian period, as well as highly mineralised areas – in recent years I have found a wide array of Roman coins and artefacts in the area.

Heading out over the crisp, frosty ground, the sun began to rise and I could feel the soil become softer as I headed across the field with the Q60. From the four built-in programs, I chose the Field mode in 14 kHz (discriminating items with a target ID under 8) – ideal for fields with lower EMI interferences. Relying on the automatic ground balance and running relatively high sensitivity, the machine seemed a little chirpy to start with but soon settled down after I dropped the sensitivity down a touch to 90 on the VDI.

I chose the 3-tone option from the available 2, 3 and 4 options on the machine and noted that the tones reminded me very much of the Tesoro and Teknetics T2 range of machines. With the Q60, you can also adjust the tone pitch, producing a linear tone that varies in pitch depending on the target's strength. The tone spacing, iron volume and discrimination can all be adjusted and changed to suit – something I was looking forward to playing with in time.

Getting Down to Business

The first dominant signal I received within minutes was a lovely two-tone signal but with a slight grunt. Now was time to see how good the Beast X coil was at pinpointing. I must admit it did seem quite tricky at first, but I found an area I was happy with and started to dig. After digging down around 25 centimetres, I placed my pinpointer in the hole and located the target in the sidewall. Not quite in the centre, but I hoped this would improve with experience. I recovered a very small piece of lead (Fig.4) which had given a very prominent, albeit not quite so clear, signal with a VDI reading of 40.

Fig.5. Just some of the finds found with the Q60.

Fig.6. An interesting gilded medieval cast mount with beautiful decoration.

Several other small pieces of lead were recovered at very respectable depths throughout the day. I filled the hole and continued through the field, slowly warming up as the sun rose over the horizon and confident that at least I was getting some good depth.

The balance of the machine with the Beast X coil was something I found a little awkward at first as I had recently been using machines with smaller coils, but I was confident I would adapt to it throughout the day. Continuing with Field mode, I went over an area I knew contained very mineralised soil which had revealed some good Roman finds in the past. After a while the Q60 became a little erratic at times, which is not uncommon here, as many detectors I have used in the past behaved similarly. I went through the elimination steps, dropping the sensitivity, manual ground balance, and even adjusting the frequency shift option and the Fesen (iron tone adjustment from 0-5) option on the Q60. The machine settled down with the sensitivity down to 80, a little lower than I have used on other recent machines, but I found it very usable in this mode.

Interesting Finds

As the day went on, I dug some interesting finds (Figs.5 and 6) at quite considerable depths. The crotal bells were nearly a foot down and gave a very clear and defined signal. However, I was still getting to grips with the pinpointing with the Beast X coil. As the sun went down, I headed back to the car on the now wet and slippery mud, somewhat different from the hard, frosted ground experienced when I arrived that morning. I switched from Field mode to Park mode again, still in 14 kHz, to see how the Q60 performed, and I had a slight two-way signal, fluttering between 38-40 – the tone was extremely crisp but very faint. Kneeling in my muddy trousers (which I had been trying to dry before getting into the car), I pinpointed, taking my time to dig an accurate hole for what would be my last of the day.

Fig.7. Early 1900s ring, probably for a child.

Around five inches down, right in the middle of the hole, I saw a tiny sparkle of a clear stone mounted onto a gold band. Pulling the clod out, I could see a finger ring with its stone intact. I quickly removed my gloves and applied my water spray to the ring – glistening in the sunset, it was an excellent finish to the day (Fig.7). On closer inspection, it was only a decorative finger ring (possibly for a child due to the tiny size) and the stone was purely cosmetic, probably lost from a fete or fair in the early 1900s, but a nice find nonetheless.

Updating the Quest

One of the great features of the Q60, like the Q30, is the ability to update the machine with any modern-day smartphone via the QuestGo app from Google Play or Apple store. Now 'sad' as I am, I actually updated the Q30 on Christmas Day and remembered how easy it was and quick too. I launched the app on my phone as a Q60 firmware update (VDI enhancement for deep targets) was available. At first, it would not connect to the machine via Bluetooth, but after quite a few attempts, it finally connected and completed the update successfully. I did look on a few forums and noticed that some other users had also had the same problem. Quest is aware of this and working on improving it, along with many other features available within the app like finds recording and tracking.

Out On a Different Site

With Christmas now out of the way, a few weeks later I headed out again to try out the Q60 on one of my forest-based permissions (Fig.8). This forest is heavily covered with ferrous material so it would allow me to assess the capabilities of the Q60 on reactivity, ferrous filtering etc. The soil is very sandy with minor mineralisation and I felt this would be a good test for the Beast X coil. Setting the machine on Park mode at 14 kHz, with the Fesen set to 3 (which may be a little high, but I didn't want it to mask out some potentially good finds), I set off.

Naturally, I was digging quite a few shotgun cartridge tips –the Q60 was producing a familiar tone with a slight grunt similar to lead, and over time, together with the VDI reading, I was able to identify these quickly, but I still dug them. Being winter coming into spring, there wasn't much foliage around the forest, which led me to wonder how long it would take before

Fig.8. The Q60 in a forest environment.

I got frustrated with the large coil getting caught in twigs and brambles on the forest floor. After a few hours, I felt the Q60 was doing well in producing good signals in a very iron infested forest. It was unearthing some very nice coins, as shown in Fig.5, as well as several buttons and a thimble. Nothing more than six inches in depth but again producing very informative tones which you knew you wanted to dig.

Waterproof Test

By lunchtime, I found a nice spot to sit and have my sandwiches (Turkey, of course) whilst deciding whether to run the Q60 fully open with no discrimination or try out the deep mode.

Fig.9. The 'Adrian' waterproof test.

I realised I had a chance to test how waterproof the machine was, as I was sitting by a very large pond. I put my sandwich down, turned on the Q60, laid the machine down into the water (Fig.9) and sat back down whilst finishing off my lunch and looking at my finds, followed by a quick call to my 'Housing Manager' (wife) to update her on when I would be home. I headed back down to the edge of the pond and lifted the Q60 out. Well, it was still on – okay, it was not at five metres depth, but the machine continued to chirp away with a nice clear screen. Not the most scientific of tests, but good enough for me.

The sun came out, and after a successful hunt in the forest, I headed back out towards a potato field. I was

Fig.10. The Q60 hunting out the Roman.

Fig.11. Lovely 16th century double-looped buckle.

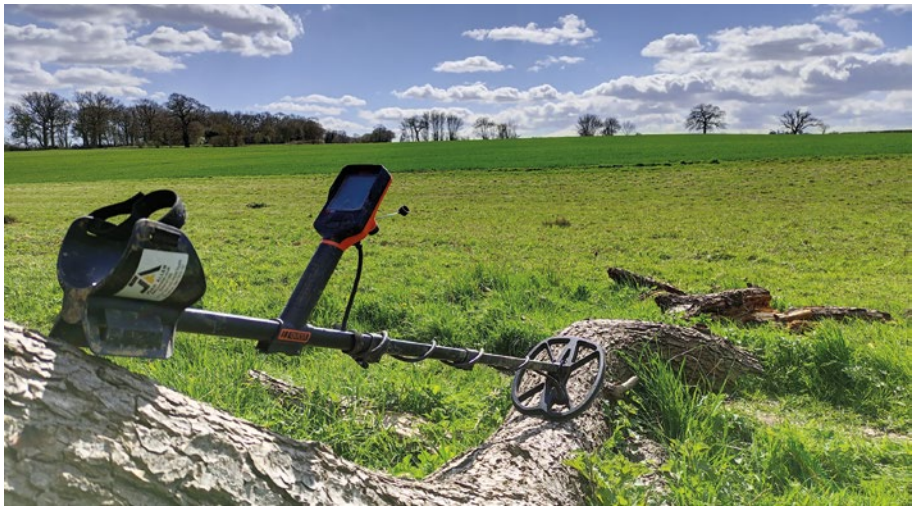

Fig.12. The Q60 sporting the Q30 coil, taken while I was having a break.

unsure whether it had been planted, so I called the farmer who confirmed it wasn't yet. This field has not produced much in the past apart from a few hammered, so surely there must be a few more to be found here? Still running in Park mode, I upped the frequency to 21 kHz, ideal for hammered. After spending a few hours on the dry and heavily compacted soil and digging just a few buttons and rogue bits of lead, I had a faint one-way signal reading 38 on the VDI. Mastering pinpointing with the Beast X coil, I dug through the dry compacted ground and ran the machine back over the hole again. The reading increased and now gave off a two-way tone with a higher VDI reading (42). I continued to dig another 3 inches, and there it was, a lovely Roman coin (Fig.10) sitting in the compacted dry clay soil some six inches down. The next signal was a lovely Tudor double-looped buckle (Fig.11), after which I rewarded myself with another break (Fig.12).

Q60 on the Beach

I had a feeling the Q60, with its dedicated beach modes, vibration mode and that superb large coil and of course being fully waterproof, would be an ideal beach detector. I am not one for choosing the beach over the countryside as I am fortunate to have many permissions to detect on, but naturally, for some, this is the first port of call. Therefore, I thought it was important that I gave the Q60 plenty of testing on the beach too (Fig.13). Being so compact, the Q60 easily folds down within a rucksack (with the coil removed), making it easily transportable, so encouraged me to head down to an area of coastline only a

Fig.13. The Q60 definitely is more than happy on the beach.

Fig.14. A selection of finds made while beach detecting.

30-minute drive away. This beach has many miles of sand and mud, and is rarely used by people soaking up the sun and leaving ring pulls everywhere. It was once a busy thoroughfare into the Thames and was in close proximity to a Second World War aircraft base used specifically for pilots with damaged planes returning from bombing raids and dog fights. All in all, I was sure I would find some interesting bits.

I tested the Wet Sand and Salt Water modes (with the latter designed for highly mineralised conditions) for quite a while and found they worked surprisingly well, especially the Wet Sand mode, which is actually suitable for both wet and dry sand. I will be honest and say that I did not brave the water at much depth (just as high as my wellies) with the Salt Water mode, but as long as I ensured I had a good ground balance on both programmes, the Q60 ran like a dream. I found some interesting finds on the beach (Fig.14), and I felt this was a 'happy place' for the Q60 to operate. However, I did find that you need to carry out the ground balance more than once to ensure it was fully stable.

Once home and going through my finds from the first hunt, I discovered that what I thought had been large shotgun shells were in fact flare shells. Pilots used these during the Second World War to signal the type and severity of damage / injury to either aircraft, crew or both before landing. If only these flare cartridge tips could talk, they would have a fascinating story to tell. One treasure I did not expect whilst detecting was a friendly dog (Fig.15) who followed me for over an hour on the first day. Concerned that it was lost, I looked for the ID tag, only to see that it was a regular and not lost at all (Fig.16).

Figs.15 & 16. The friendly little dog that I named Quest and its ID tag.

Beach Returns

Each time I visited over the following months, the dog (now named Quest) was there waiting for me. He continued to follow me whilst I was detecting, and to this day, he is still sitting there waiting for the next walker or detectorist. Apart from being the first machine to find me a dog, the Q60, performed well on the beach and was a pleasure to use, finding plenty of early three-ring bullets (Fig.17) and several little bits of World War Two history at good depths without too much chatter.

Quest Q60 Features

Tones

The Q60 comes with 1 - 4 tones plus pitch which produces a linear tone for all accepted targets and varies in pitch based on the strength of the signal. I mainly ran the Q60 with 3 tones as my preferred option.

Tone Break

You can change the point at which each tone starts on the Q60 when either the 2, 3 or 4 Tone audio option has been selected. The adjustment starts from low tone to higher tones setting. An excellent function to have.

Fesen

This is basic terminology for setting your iron volume on the Q30 and runs from 0-5 and amplifies iron in trashy areas (0=off and 5=high trash areas). In my opinion this function is possibly more use for detectorists 'over the pond'. With the Fesen on, I found it does identify iron well, but can leave you missing small targets close to the iron by the heavy iron tone given off. I tested this with a small thimble next to a piece of iron. With the Fesen off, I had a tone, albeit scratchy, but one you would dig; with Fesen on, the iron tone almost cancelled out the thimble.

Frequency Shift

As the name says, this allows for minor shifts in the operating frequency of a few Hz on the Q60s multi-frequencies of 5 kHz, 14 kHz and 21 kHz. I tested the Q60 next to other machines, both VLF and Multi-Frequency. I found traditional static VLF frequency machines

Fig.17. Three ringed bullet – many of these were found on the beach.

were not an issue, but I did have to change this whilst detecting within 10 feet of Multi-Frequency machines. I did find this was more of an issue than when I tested the Q30, probably due to the extra sensitivity of the Beast X coil.

Ground Tracking

The ground tracking allows the Q60 to automatically adjust the ground balance as you detect and helps mitigate the changing effects of mineralisation. I did try this on the Q60 but felt more confident in controlling this myself, as you can tell when the machine needs to be re-ground balanced.

All Metal Mode called 'AM Static'

This can be achieved by pressing and holding the pinpoint button and at the same time pressing the up button on the left of the control panel and then let go of the pinpoint button. In this mode, pressing the power/settings button once gives you Disc ID, Threshold and AM Sens. To escape this mode you press and hold the pinpoint button again and the up arrow button. The AM Static is a non-motion mode and not officially documented. Those of us who were detecting back in the early days of detecting will remember that non-motion detectors were the only types available, which this option is similar to.

Search Modes

The Q60 comes with 4 detecting modes, Park, Field, Wet Sand, Saltwater and Gold 1 and Gold 2. These modes offer you varying adjustment levels with the tones, sensitivity, iron volume and discrimination notching. I feel that the Gold modes are not really relevant here in the UK – they enable the Q60 to operate silently until a target is detected, a background threshold can be heard as you sweep the coil. On larger targets or those just under the surface, you will be alerted by an audio 'beep' much the way you would in one of the other search modes.

SEARCH MODE	REJECTED TARGET IDs	ACCEPTED TARGET IDs
PARK	01 to 4	05 to 99
FIELD	01 to 8	09 to 99
WET SAND	01 to 16	17 to 99
SALT WATER	01 to 16	17 to 99
GOLD	NONE	ALL
GOLD 2	NONE	ALL
DEEP MODE	under 10	10 to 99

Conclusion

The Q60 is no doubt a deep machine, it has a great recovery speed up there with the big boys and absolutely loves coins. On occasion I did feel that the coil was slightly overpowering – although it is well-balanced, it is just a fraction too large for my liking and almost seemed too powerful for the detector when on high / maximum sensitivity. However, like most of the Quest X range, the coils are interchangeable and I did swap the Q30 coil onto the Q60 in the last few weeks of testing and that worked like a treat – although not giving me as much depth, it retained the recovery speed and felt more suited to the machine. Ok, it is not an automatic multi-frequency VLF machine but is that a big thing? The Deus, now nearly 12 years old has coped extremely well with similar technology. I found depth was one of the key points on the Q60 and even more when selecting the deep mode at 5 kHz. I actually gave up digging some signals due to how deep they were – one example was a horseshoe where I dug down nearly two feet!

It really is a machine that not only punches deep but also has an array of features you can easily tweak. One function I would like to see is the ability to change the recovery speed, which is not currently an option. I feel the Q60 is a very powerful machine if used to its full potentail once you have taken some time to learn all of its functions. Over a period of a few months, it really began to grow on me like the Q30, but I was still learning from it and no doubt will continue to do so.

Is it worth the extra money? Well, if you consider that you are getting a Quest Xpointer and Wirefree Pro headphones, which alone would set you back over £200 and are of excellent quality, the answer is a definite yes from me. For more information on the full Quest range visit: www.joanallen.co.uk

Fig.18. Me enjoying the Q60 on the beach.