

An introduction to beach detecting.

The Barnacle.

Over the last 25 yrs I must have spent 1000's of hours detecting the coastlines of the UK and some parts of Europe. I have even lived in the back of a van for several seasons to enable me to be hot on the trail of the next find, over this period I have tried to learn and understand the beaches.

I have now come to the conclusion that we cant understand them, they will change without warning, one day they can strip right down, gully's can form and finds can be abundant, and the next day its all gone, one thing that we can be sure of is why so many treasured items were lost and are still waiting to be found. I believe we have not, nor ever will touch the tip of the treasure chest that is held within the sands, to understand this we must look back in time to the Victorian era when holidaying on the coast was a national event, the newly formed railway network gave access to the coast for the wealthy and poor alike, although they rarely mixed, the wealthy would head for places such as Llandudno and the working class would go to Rhyl or Blackpool, they would flock in the hundreds of thousands, when the large mills would close for the annual holiday. Everyone would be set for a great time, they would wear their best jewellery and finery as showmanship was all the rage, dancing on the piers, walking along the prom or swimming in the sea. The ladies would be drawn into the sea by horse and carts so they could enter the water without being seen, usually in a different area to where the men would swim. Rings would slip easily from cold hands as the body tries to conserve heat by sending as much blood as it can to the internal organs to keep the torso warm. Beaches were a far different place to what we see today.

I often pick up old postcards to see where the bathing areas were, as with many beaches today, it is hard to visualise how popular they once were, postcards can also pick your spirits up when your on a deserted, barren beach with the wind and rain bashing down you can remember why you're there and what it is you are searching for.

In order for you to be successful you must understand the tide, the tide works on a very predictable cycle, a rule of thumb that I usually work to is to get to the beach about 2.5 hours after high tide, and once you have your gear sorted follow the tide out. I have seen some great tidal prediction software on the Internet that takes all the hard work out of predicting or knowing when the best tides are for any beach.



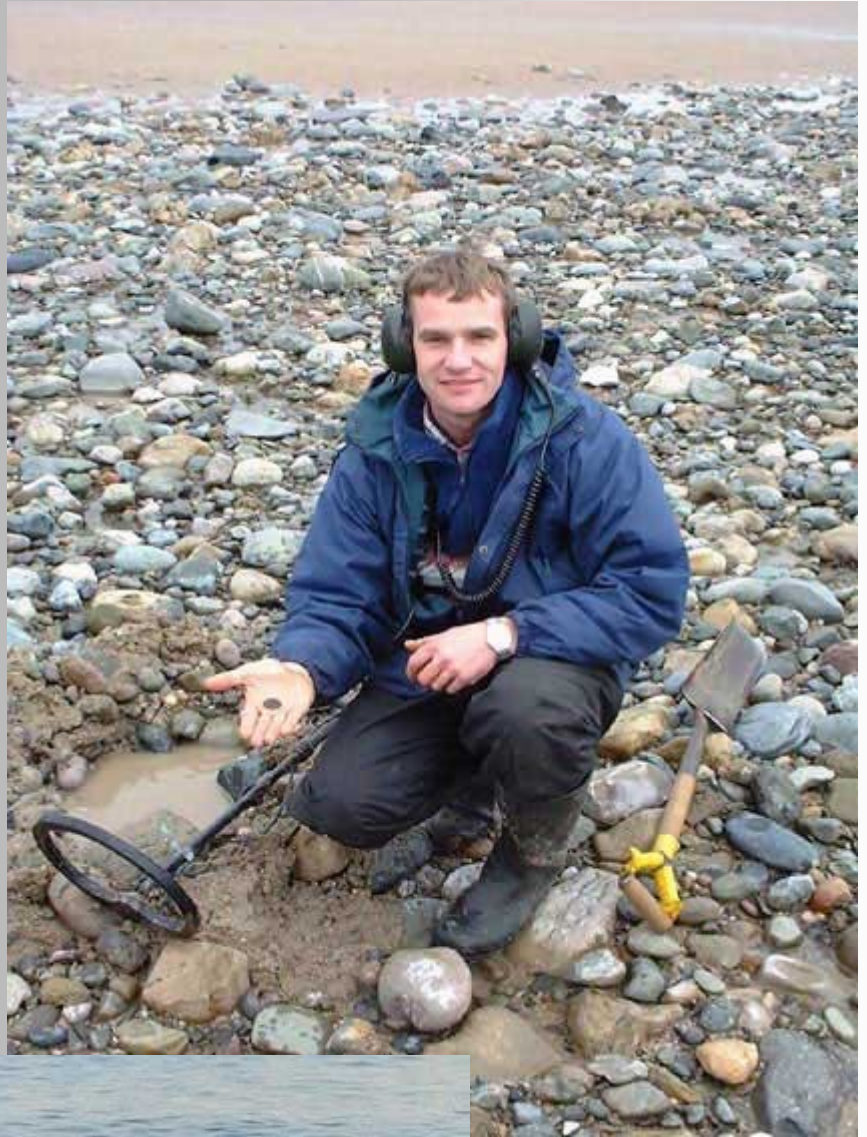




victorian rings



college ring



stripped beach





Gully opening up

I have noticed there are two types of detectorist on the beach, the coin shooter that works the top of the beach after all the modern losses, most machines can be used in this area but if your not going to venture far from the dry sand its best to have an id detector like a whites xlt, Xp Deus or the new v3 so you can discriminate between finds. You will not find much jewellery here just the odd modern loss. That's unless a good storm washes a step on the beach and uncovers all the old finds, but then you will find your machine might not be up to the job. The second detectorist will bypass this area and go straight for the low tide line, they will be armed with either a pulse induction or a multi frequency machine that can cope with the wet sand. This is the area that most of the rings are found but they can be deep so be prepared to dig.

You will need 3 main items to find the goodies on the beach. The First is a detector that will work on both the wet and dry sand that you can run at a good sensitivity without loosing any depth, my preferred machine is the Minelab sovereign xs2a pro. I have had it adapted with an extension from the reject / all metal mode switch that allows me to flick with a toggle switch between the 2 modes. I always search in all metal listening for the v faint changes in threshold, I then flick into reject if it nulls it's rejecting, if the signal is still good its worth digging but if you have no change in tone your picking up a signal that's deeper than the reject will work. So its worth taking a plug out then rechecking, once you locate an area with deep finds, work slow pick out the faintest of signals as the higher density items like gold rings will generally be a layer down from the coins, gold will sink until it hit's a hard layer that rarely gets disturbed, usually on beaches this consists of a thick brown or black layer of sand If you're picking finds from this you're in the right area and its only a matter of time before you are rewarded.

The second item you need is a good spade, finds can be in thick clay, stones or sand that runs like water as you try to dig When working wet sand I try to make sure I get the find out on the first dig, as once the water fills the hole it can become a hard task to recover the item, only time and experience with your machine will give you the knowledge to know how deep and how to pinpoint your machine.

The third item you need is patience you can go for months without any finds just the odd coin but keep focused and keep learning where the hot spots are, I always look for markers on the beaches for example posts, rocks or sea breaks so you can judge at a glance how low or high the sands are, a good idea is to take a camera and pick a fixed point such as a post or wall take pictures from this point of the beach on every visit to see how it changes, this way time can be saved working fruitless areas and more time spent after the goodies

good hunting