

Mission impossible, chips and a broken marriage ***By Firesmudge (Paul)***

It was August when I received a phone call from a farmer I had not seen for 2 years, I was surprised to hear from him due to the time lapse. He asked if I was still doing the 'metal detecting thing' as had been over all his fields looking for a lost ring belonging to his mum that was lost in the forties. Sadly I never recovered the ring because of lapsed memories of where it was roughly lost, but not for the want of trying.

Anyway he asked if I could look for another lost ring which again was a bit of a surprise after my last failure. He explained that he had diversified his business and was heavily into wood chip production as well as still farming.

an impossible task

One of his workers was loading a huge skip full of chips and securing the tarp on the top when his gold wedding band dropped into the wood chips at some point. He frantically searched but to no avail as you can see by the picture below it would have been an impossible task, the proverbial needle in a haystack or should I say ring in the wood chips. He was devastated and got a severe ear bashing from the good lady that night but had resigned himself to the ring going to the furnace.



We made arrangements to try search the skip during unloading at the customers premises, I had one shot as the chips were getting unloaded they were going straight into a burner for heating the complex so one chance. To be honest I was not hopeful after hearing the task and knowing it would be

very lucky to get the ring before it went for cremation. The night before I got a text to say we have to put off for a week as the skip will not be unloaded by the customer so I unpacked the gear and waited for the following week.

I turned up to see for the first time the mammoth task ahead it was a bigger job than I thought. A hulking blue skip packed full of wood chips greeted me with a mechanical tele-handler digger at the ready to unload it and dump the chips into the hungry mouth of the furnace.

no way is this going to work

A plan was needed so first thing I said to the owner of the chips was I am here to do as best I can without messing up your schedule and making too much mess with chips. A very sceptical owner said no way is this going to work and I thought to myself maybe it is mission impossible but it was worth a shot.

I decided to scan the ground immediately in front of the skip where the chips were to fall to test for any possible signals that I could remove to ensure an accurate search.

BEEP! I recovered 20p from the area which apart from that signal was clean, so far so good. Next task was to open the doors of the skip and try scan the vertical wall of chips before they fell out. At this point I should mention that the ring owner thought it was near the door some place?

The doors opened and sure enough my eyes met a vertical wall of chips a quick scan or two with the machine trying to avoid the metal skip as much as possible commenced, watching for the tell tale signs of an avalanche at the same time.

I moved as the chips started to slip so I decided to use the bucket on the digger to hold the top half in place within the skip and scrape out the bottom onto the afore mentioned sterile ground then we would clear our feet loading the furnace and repeat the operation once searched. First load out was clear, well at least I hoped it was because no second chance for this job. The bucket came out fully loaded as the upper chips had fallen into it, the driver stuck it in reverse and asked if it was to go in the furnace I said it would be better to search it before it goes or we could miss the ring he agreed with a look in his eye of 'You're mad!'

We dumped it on the already searched stuff and he extended the bucket into the skip to protect me from further slippage then stepped out of the cab to watch BEEP! A faint but positive signal showed on the DFX I started to fumble through the chips with my hand running each handful over the search head, nothing. Again scanned the heap and the signal was there by this time I had an eager pair of eyes at my shoulder.

More fumbling and head scanning, dumping each handful as it was clear, I could hear the signal but not see a thing when an almighty scream was heard in my left ear "It's there the ring I see it" and a huge BEEP! In my right ear. The ring had slid down the heap from the top bucket load after I picked up the handfuls and became visible to both as I ran the head over the pile again. I knew it was there it just kept moving in the loose pile.



We both just looked at each other in total amazement we actually had found the ring and turned mission impossible into mission accomplished. I texted the farmer to say job done he was speechless and said he will tell the ring owner the good news. I thanked the customer for his help and let him load the furnace knowing I had saved the ring from certain melt down. I headed straight to the farm and left the ring in the office and headed home smiling knowing that I have saved a marriage, well I can exaggerate that bit!.

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