

## UK Beach Detecting - by PhilD



### Introduction

I hope the following information will be useful to anyone who would like to have a go at beach detecting. It's great [to be beside the seaside](#), to get away from it all, to chill out, take the air, get a tan, an ice cream, stay at a B&B or holiday camp, enjoy yourself in the beautiful scenery and do some beach combing and detecting. Finding something is a bonus.

### Uk Beaches

In 2010 Blackpool was named the [favourite seaside resort](#) by Which? Other favourite resorts were;

- Brighton, Sussex
- Whitby, North Yorks
- Bournemouth, Dorset
- Scarborough, North Yorks
- Newquay, Cornwall
- Torquay, Devon
- St Ives, Cornwall
- Skegness, Lincs
- Great Yarmouth, Norfolk



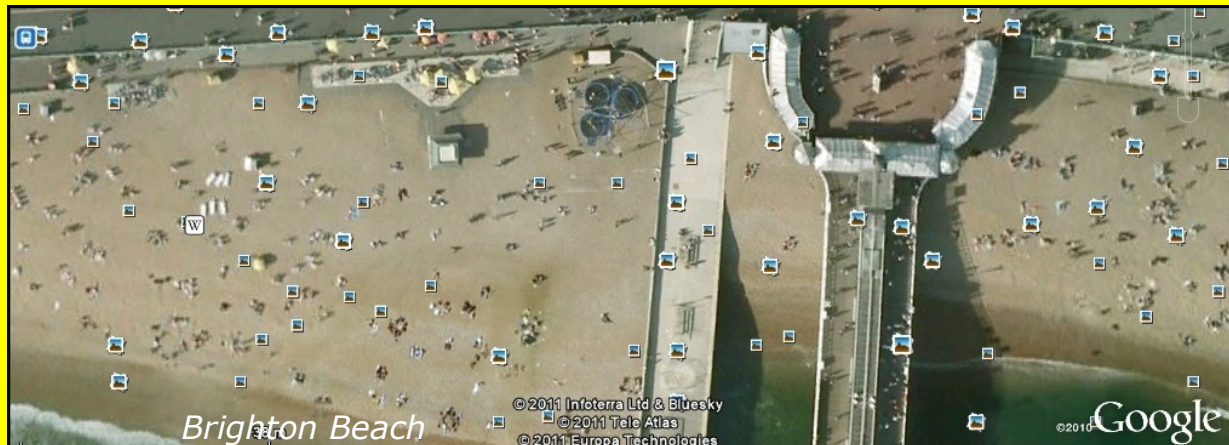
Blackpool Beach Finds

Map showing the [principle seaside towns](#)

Map showing the [smaller seaside towns](#)

[Google Earth](#) will let you zoom into the beaches and ticking the historical imagery in 'view' will show the beaches at different times of the year.

Be sure to check the Photo's and Panoramio boxes in 'layers' on the bottom left of the screen and you will be able to see images others have posted of the beaches.



Viewing [Web Cameras](#) can give you an idea of what the beach looks like before you go.

## Detectors

There are detectors made specifically for beach detecting, however most detectorists would like to use their land detector on beaches and not have to splash out on a [beach detector](#).

However due to mineralization not all detectors are suitable for beach detecting, especially when it comes to wet sand and submersion in water. You may find your detecting is confined to the dry sand.

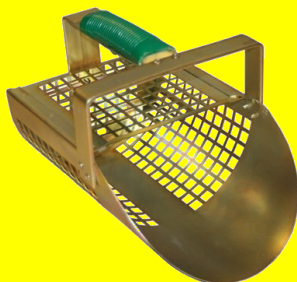
It is worth considering when first purchasing a detector that it should also be at home on the beach. The [Minelab](#) Sovereign, Elite and Explorer are deemed to be good on beaches but care should be taken not to allow salt water to get into the control boxes.

## Accessories

### [Garrett Propointer](#)



### [Garrett Sand Scoop](#)



## **Best Times to Detect**

*Try and detect before people are on the beach and after they have left, this causes the least inconvenience to other beach users and you won't feel like the 'pied piper' with hoards of kids trying to dig your every signal.*

*Be prepared to get out there with your metal detector right after a major storm passes through. If you don't you may miss some of the best metal detecting of your life. The surf from large storms will erode many inches, sometimes feet of sand off of a beach exposing historical artefacts and other great finds that were previously too deep to find with a metal detector.*

## **Tide Tables & Web Links**

[\*BBC Tides\*](#)

[\*Tidal Predictions\*](#)

[\*Easy Tide\*](#)

[\*Understanding Tides\*](#)

[\*Good Beach Guide\*](#)

## **Research**

*Check the local library for old pictures and articles of events on the beach showing where people gathered in the past. Google Earth might show where people congregate on mass in recent years.*

*Find postcards showing the beach at the height of summer, they will show the 'hot spots' to search where the greatest numbers of people congregate.*

*Talk to the beach attendants and bait diggers, ask the fishermen that you meet on the beach, have they noticed any recent changes to the beach by recent storms. Any newly exposed rocks at low water and what wind direction will stir up the sea and sand to expose the lower levels.*

*Talk to old residents, do they have an interesting story to tell about their Grandfather who witnessed a shipwreck as a boy.*

*Check out the [\*O/S map\*](#) and [\*Magic Map\*](#) for beach layouts, they show features such as Mean Low and Mean High water lines and tidal ponds.*

*Kinks in the Mean Low water lines are formed by geological gullies in the bedrock which trap losses and do not shift position like sand and shingle gullies.*

*Check out [\*old maps\*](#) they show how things would have looked in the past.*

*Try to get to see a Yachtsman's inshore water chart for the area.*

*Watch other detectorists and learn which areas are producing.*

*Ask if any dredging away of sand has been carried out or if sand from another beach has been deposited and if so where was the sand from and detect there.*



## **Permission**

Thanks to the [NCMD](#) negotiating a permit system with [The Crown Estate](#), most beaches can be detected on for free, subject to [terms and conditions](#). All it takes is a quick email [to apply for a permit](#) and one will be emailed to you within a few minutes. Maps are available on the website showing the areas covered by the permit. The Duchy applies a licence system in Cornwall.

## **Dry Sand**

Detect the Towel line, on most beaches there is a strip of beach just above the high tide mark where the majority of beach goers set down their towels and chairs. This can be one of the most productive areas to search and since it is in the dry sand it is very easy to dig targets. This is typically one of the first areas to hunt on a beach, lots of dropped coins & a chance of jewellery.

When up on the dry sand, look for the remains of beach parties, barbeques, sand castles, where the ice cream van parked, where the Donkey rides are, hot dog stands, anywhere people would have reached into their pockets for money, they are all good indications of where you will find the spoils.

In the sand dunes, look for where the picnics have taken place.

## **Wet Sand**

Detect the sweet spot, this is the area between the high tide mark and the low tide mark of a beach, search parallel to the sea. By doing this, the sand you cover isn't going between dry and wet, making some detectors loose balance all the time.

This area is likely to contain gold and silver rings that have slipped off bathers due to their fingers becoming wet.

This area is reloaded by mother nature every time there is a gale or storm.

## **Hard Pack**

Detect the hard pack, black sand and shallow sand, try to find areas where the sand and shingle levels are low, (not deep) or where the hard pack may be exposed. Most beaches have a hard surface below the sand and shingle, and this is where the majority of the older finds will be found because coins and artefacts quickly sink down through the upper layers of the beach.

Also look for patches of small stones and shells that have come together and been left by the tidal action, often you will find a like sized coin or ring has come to rest in the same area.

Some people take a four foot by half inch round steel bar and 'survey the beach looking for hard pack (not gravel or rock) within the depth the detector will detect finds. If the sand is too deep you will have to return when the wind has eroded it.

The bar is pushed down, when it hits rock the sound is sharp, gravel is a medium tone and with clay it's a dull tone.

Look for patches of sand wetter than others as the tide goes out. Check the sea walls and piers for damp areas which might suggest the sand levels have dropped.

## **Black Sand**

*Look for patches of black sand on the beach because this is a good sign that the top layers of sand have been washed away and you can get to the lower levels and therefore the older finds.*

*A lot has been said about "Black sand", all of which is true, but not all beaches have a sub strata of black sand, some may have hard packed stone as the sub strata, while others may have black, grey, yellow or orange clay and some will have a solid rock shelf. It is always prudent to look for areas where the top covering of sand has been temporarily eroded away.*

## **Surf**

*Surf or shallow water detecting may be necessary in areas where you have little or no tide, these areas may be, lakes, rivers or areas of the sea bed that low tide does not give you access to, shallow water can be hard to search and you will need the right equipment, but the rewards can be great, as this is the area where rings can easily slip from the cold fingers of swimmers.*

*You will need a good underwater detector, some detectors now come with iron rejection that can be a big advantage to the pulse induction machines but will not detect as deep. With all underwater machines particular attention must be taken to ensure all seals are clean and fitted correctly, you will also require a strong long handled scoop to retrieve the find and finds pouch, depending on location and weather conditions a wet / dry suit will also be needed, waders can be used if only working shallow water ie river beds.*

*What to look for in finding a productive area is the same as on the wet beach covered earlier in the article, ie : gully's, black sand, and hard pack, but most of all you need to search the areas that have had the most activity.*

*Safety must always be on your mind it is so easy to get out of your depth or even detect along a sand bar only to find you cant get back to the beach as the inner gully deepens, it is wise to only detect the shallows with a companion that can alert someone if you get into difficulty.*



## **Features**

*Around the pier - Check around and under the pier if there is one, most were built by the Victorians and some very nice finds can be made under them, one word of warning, beware of fishing hooks, broken glass and junkies needles, so don't dig in the sand with your bare hands.*

*The sea wall, large rocks, boulders and groynes - are good places to search, sunbathers use these as back rests, wind breaks and clothes hangers, look to see which way the ebb tide runs along the beach, items will be swept along in this direction and come to rest against any obstructions such as groynes or rocks.*

*Look for the remains of stakes and piles - they may indicate a landing stage or dock, a stone and shingle bank that juts out at right angles to the beach, all are good indications that the area may have been used for the loading and unloading of cargo.*

*Look for anything unusual on the beach - ie where a stream meets the sea, look to see how it has eroded its way down to the sea, it will give a good hint of what the sub-strata is like beneath the sand.*

*Look for deep cuts and areas of the beach that have been eroded away.*

*Most designated bathing beaches now have lifeguards/beach patrols during the summer months, they usually patrol an area between a pair of flags set out along the beach, bathers are encouraged to stay within this area for safety reasons, it is a good place to start your search.*

*Footpaths from holiday camps leading to the beach can also be productive.*

*On your map of the beach add all the useful features you come across and mark the position of your finds, a pattern might evolve over time.*

## **Dangers**

*Being cut off by the tide - make sure the beach is safe to detect and the tide does not rush in quickly and get behind you.*

*Avoid - beaches with quicksand.*

*Needles and broken glass - can be a problem where yobs gather so don't dig with your hands.*

*Munitions - reporting UXB's to the police and coastguard and keep people a safe distance from the area.*

*A mobile phone would be very useful if you need to call for help.*

## **Remove Litter and fill in holes**

*Remember you are an ambassador for the hobby. If you leave the beach better than you found it you can feel proud of yourself. So please remove any litter you see and fill all your holes in.*



## Typical Finds

*To a large extent you can forget old finds, they do turn up but not that often, the history side tends to be post medieval. You are most likely to find coins and possibly rings and other jewellery amongst the ring pulls, tin cans and other refuse left by holiday makers and day trippers. Sometimes wartime munitions turn up!!, so take care!. Fossils are also found on many beaches.*

*Some people have been very successful at finding things, which comes down mainly to choosing the right beach, research, observation, experience and putting the hours in at the right time.*



*I would like to thank the contributors to the websites I have linked to for their very informative content. Many thanks to the barnacle and munkiezuncle for the surf info and the images of finds and UKDN members on whose forum comments the article is based.*