

Product Test

New SEF Coil for the Minelab Explorer SE



I received a private message on one of the popular forums about two months ago from Craig Allison of Joan Allen Electronics asking me to contact him - which I did. He wanted to know if I would test the new Detech SEF (Symmetrical Electromagnetic Field) 15 inch x 12 inch coil for my Minelab Explorer SE and write a report. There was only one answer to that question.

First Thoughts

I waited anxiously for the coil to arrive, and a couple of days later I was opening the box like a child would on his birthday.

The first thing that caught my eye was the shape; it was like a double yolk! The coil seemed solid and had a high quality feel about it but best of all was the coil cover (included with each SEF coil at no extra charge). I noticed instantly that it was a tight and snug fit with no silly gaps that allow a lot of soil to work its way inside.

I fitted the coil to my Minelab Explorer SE and was surprised at how well it matched to the stem (no need to cut bits of plastic up to make a washer - it was a perfect tight fit with no chance of working its way loose).

The first thing I noticed with the coil fitted was that the detector seemed not

quite as well balanced as my 15 inch Coiltec WOT coil. This surprised me a little as the new coil is lighter than the WOT.

Overall, my first impression is that this is a coil for the dedicated detectorist whose prime concern is to pull up the goodies.

In the Field

Naturally, I was dying to test the new coil, and felt that I had the perfect site on which to try it. This was local, a pasture field, the site of a Roman encampment, and very mineralised. I have been hitting this site for a good 20 years and finds are now very thin on the ground. It must be worked very slowly and carefully to hear the slightest whispers. I had a gap in my job (a carer) at teatime before my last two calls for the night, so could get half an hour in before dark.

I arrived at the field, donned my boots and Gortex, switched on the SE, and started sweeping slowly. Straight away, I noticed that the machine was quieter and more stable than with other

coils I had used. I search in full sensitivity at 32, iron mask 31 or all metal, audio 3, gain 10, etc (so the detector is very hot and "maxed out".)

I'd only walked a few yards when I received a loud, solid low tone, which turned out to be a button. A fluke, I thought, or just a signal that's been missed?



Like other fields this one has hotspots, but these seemed to have all dried up as we had hit them from every possible angle. I walked up to one of them and started searching. My detector gave a clear medium tone and I pulled out a piece of lead. The next signal was a low tone and up came a grotty Roman coin of Constantine. I couldn't believe it! In this little area I had nine signals before I had to return to work; some were deep but some were only a few inches below the surface. This proved to me that the coil was doing a good job of cutting through the iron. I knew there were more finds to be had, and couldn't wait to get back on. On the way back to the car I rang Joan Allen's as I was gob-smacked about what this coil was doing.

I continue to hit the site in my breaks from work, which are only short spells of time. I'm continuing to get lots of signals where previously I was struggling. Some of the bigger finds (the high tone ones) are coming up at amazing depth. An *as* of Constantine was recovered at a good 12 inches. After that a lovely sweet fluty mellow tone produced a lead swan paper weight at a good 14 inches (which I think is astounding considering the amount of iron in the site).

Generally, I'm pulling out very deep signals from all over the site that would have been out of depth previously. The tones with this coil to be smoother and more pronounced than my other coils, and the pinpointing was good too.

Woodland

The woods opposite where I live was the next site on which I tried the new coil. I have recovered thousands of coins, and lots of gold and silver jewellery, from here over the years but again it seemed to have dried up.

Again there were hotspots that had produced in the past, one being a foot-path running along the side of a ruined mill. I believe this to be the most contaminated ground that I have ever searched on. It's a type of cinder path with lots of coke and iron mixed in. The coil handled this path very well, was stable, smooth, and really cut through the mineralization. I pulled up a number of bits of lead and silver paper, together with a 1928 shilling and a Victorian halfpenny (both from depth). This was previously totally devoid of signals so I was well impressed.

I next walked down to a meadow on a slope that had very clean ground conditions. Here I pulled up some more coins and bits of lead, plus a sack seal. Some of these targets came from very impressive depths, and mostly gave high tone fluty signals.

As I walked back home I decided to dip the coil in the steam to a depth of 2 feet and scrape it along the bottom to see how it reacted. It worked just as it did before the dip and gave no false signals at all. I then went on to pull a few more coins from the leaf mould under the trees.

Plough

Every Sunday I go on a dig organised by Advent (his Web forum name); the only time I miss is if I go on a Central Searchers dig or a rally. At the time of writing this I've been on a total of four digs with Keith (Advent) so have got used to what this new coil does and am usually the last off the field along with my detecting pals muddy Mick, Gary J, Billox, and Rev.

The first dig I took the coil on turned a few heads. I also received a few comments about its funny shape, and even a few laughs. The fields were a mixture of soft but flat plough, and stubble. The coil did a good job of flattening down the latter, with no false signals. This was not as hard as the summer stubble, but I should be able to crush that down too with a bit of extra arm ache (no pain, no gain).

I found nothing special on that search but received a vast amount of signals. I ended up with my finds bag filled with some very minute bits.

The following week we were near Ripon on a site we subsequently found had been hit twice by well-attended club digs. The two large fields were perfect for detecting - lovely flat loamy sandy soil drilled with peas. The coil sang for me in all metal the whole day long and I was rewarded with five hammered coins. All targets gave a lovely positive tone (three of them would have given only a whisper with my previous coil). The coins



included a nice Alexander III Scottish penny and a voided cut half of Henry III. This is to say nothing of a massive amount of various other bits and pieces. The last four hammered all came from areas that had previously been hit hard and showed a large amount of footprints and filled in holes. However, all of these coins were beyond the depth of normal machines and fast swingers (slow down, it does make a difference).

The following week we were searching in 4 inches of snow, and having to cope with the odd blizzard. The coil handled these conditions well and rewarded me with a Charles I penny (rose each side). The snow cleared up later and then melted, which was a blessing. I then heard on my mobile that a few Roman bronze coins had been found on a different field that Advent had organised with the farmer. This was covered with winter stubble and weeds. With only an hour or so now to go before dark I headed there to see the usual hardened faces battling it out. Panner had his head down and was working slowly with his SE, so I knew he was pulling the goodies out. I likewise got my head down and after the usual bits of lead and other nondescript pieces of non-ferrous metal was finally rewarded with a Roman "grot". I concentrated on that area and was eventually rewarded with six Roman bronze coins together with a nice *denarius*. All came from depth and produced clear audible tones. I was reluctant to leave but it was getting dark and

starting to snow again. I left wishing that I had been able to spend a full day on that particular field, but that's how it goes.

The last search was on a site that has seen countless digs over the years. The field was quite rough ploughed, but at least the soil was soft and very easy to dig. Signals had to be worked for, and there was not too many of them. I was again detecting in all metal, and most of the signals I received were deep. The coil did very well here, scraping over the lumps and bumps and locking onto finds. My day's tally was six Roman bronze coins and a broken silver *denarius*. There was also a first for me in the form of part of a beautiful Saxon chip-carved gilded brooch decorated in style II animal and 7th century. This gave a faint but smooth low tone and was a good 8 inches down. I'd already fallen in love with this coil but now I felt we were becoming inseparable.

Conclusion

This coil is without doubt the best that I have used with my Explorer. It's solid and well made with a coil cover that actually fits tight and snug. It is very stable, makes the machine run quieter than with other coils on any ground, and enhances the signals while making them smoother. It seems to just lock onto the signal better and drag it out. It works over and cuts in between the iron very well indeed, and the depth is awesome.

It is very sensitive at picking up the smallest pieces of metal and cut quarters with ease.

All the sites I have used it on have been worked for years, but it does not seem like that. Thinking about it, I have many "old" sites that might become "new" sites again.

The only minor niggle I could find was with the balance, which I felt could be better. However, this is a coil for the dedicated detectorist who, like me, will hardly notice after a couple of hours in the field.

If you know how to handle the Explorer, then this is the perfect companion for the machine, and will increase your finds rate.

Well done to Detech for a winning formula and a recipe that other coil makers will have to follow as technology moves on.

As stated above, SEF means "Symmetrical Electromagnetic Field" but some users have renamed the term "Size Equals Finds".

Joan Allen Electronics are the main dealers for the Detech SEF coils, please state the model of your Minelab detector when ordering. The coil type I was using fits both Explorers and Quattros. Specific SEF coils are also available for the Minelab Sovereign. This test concerns the 15 inch x 12 inch coil which is available at £149.

Others coils available include the 12 inch x 10 inch at £139, and the 18 inch x 15 inch at £159. All prices include coil covers. TH