

From The Whites Metal Detecting Forum

<http://forum.treasurenet.com/whites/index.php>

## How deep are your old coins??

« Reply #7 on: November 20, 2006, 06:16:37 AM »

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"Old Coins" as well as more modern coins, can be located at various depths depending upon the ground environment, the amount of deposition at the site, as well as any other activity that can cause displacement.

I'll add this comment, too. based upon forty-some years of active detecting and encountering many people afield at the time of their discovery of a coin-type target, I am of the opinion that many, perhaps most, hobbyists are not very good at judging the actual depth at which a target was positioned.

Sometimes, they rely on the detector's visual information and a 'coin depth' read-out. This reading can be in error due to the coil used, the control settings used, and especially due to any 'detuning' caused during pinpointing. More often than not, the reading is greater than the actual target depth from the coil.

Those who do not have such a feature also often display an inability to 'guesstimate' the actual, on-site coil-to-target distance. It might be associated with height of the grass combined with the illusion of a hole or cut plus, but many times I have had to correct a claim made afield.

I've heard a guy or gal comment that they just located a 'deep coin' and claimed it to be a good 9 or 10 inches. I'd look in the dug hole at compacted ground, sometimes seeing an impression left by a coin, and show them a few ways to quickly determine a closer depth report.

Take a look at a sheet of your printer paper. Knowing that it is 8½" x 11", how often do people honestly find coins down in the dirt at either of those depths? I'll assure you it isn't often.

A quick, in-the-field check is to use a paper bill. Our US paper money is about 6⅛" in length. It's easy to fold a bill up so as to be stiff and use it to measure a coil-to-target distance. It's usually simply an illusion that causes errant readings, but I am sure that, on occasion, a little bit of added fudging enters into some coin depth reports.

Anyway, to answer your post:

**"When some of you fellas find old coins...say older than 1940,...at what depth are you usually finding them?"**... As a rule, most are from the surface to perhaps 3"-4" deep. I have eyeballed or swept over a surface coin only to pick up such finds as an 1858 Seated Liberty dime, an 1853 Seated Liberty quarter, and 1868 Shield nickel, an 1864 Two-Cent piece, but I am not sure of the oldest surface penny I have found. I believe it was an 1874 Indian head, but it could have been one from the late 1860's.

Yes, these are the oldest US coins I have found and they were laying right there in plain view or partially in view, and you can't get any shallower than that! The key to making any older-coin finds is LOCATION. In my case, these are typical coin depth, surface to 3"-4", that I have pulled coins from in most of the western US ghost towns I have hunted since May of 1969.

You see, in many of these older-use sites there are many reasons why they are still shallow, even to the point of being in plain view. The main reason is that "coins don't sink." That's right, they don't just don't sink. Coins might be located deeper in an area due to displacement, which I guess you could refer to as sinking, such as at a beach or other place where there is wave action or other each movement. The heavier objects, due to specific gravity, will tend to 'sink' but it is only due to displacement. To me, there is a difference.

Too often I hear people offer the idea that an older coin is going to be deeper simply because it has been lost longer and has had time to sink. I guess they figure that the coin is heavier than any leaf or blade of grass or dirt, and therefore they just 'sink,' All too often, when I ask people why they think coins naturally sink, they just say that that is what they have heard. Nothing to support it, just heresy.

A coin that is dropped can be stepped on by humans or animals and pushed deeper into the ground. A dropped object can be covered with falling leaves, mowed or naturally dying grasses or other vegetation, and this is deposition that builds up on top of the object. Erosion in some cases can deposit dirt and/or rocks and/or sand or 🤖 over a lost object ... or in some cases remove a covering and expose a target or cause it to be shallower than it might have been. Plowing or digging and similar man-caused action will also *relocate* targets, but that's not 'sinking.'

Yes, in **some** cases a very wet ground environment can cause some displacement to occur, but it has to be super saturated and a very porous or fluid type of ground material to allow that. Most of the time, it just doesn't

happen.

A coin dropped onto some grass might work its way to the base of the grass, but that's more natural displacement (a continued falling event) rather than "sinking." Once it gets to the solid ground it is not going anywhere. It can get pushed down, or it can get built up over, but for the most part it's travel has ended.

I prefer to hunt older-use locations, such as ghost towns, pioneer encampments, military encampments, Indian/Military conflict sites, old recreation sites, and other places that have, for the most part, not been disturbed by man or beast. Such locations usually lack the modern-day 'junk' and the targets are all located relatively shallow.

Oh, I have found the newer Memorial pennies or early clad dimes and quarters at some deeper depths, but they are almost always at those depths due to some type of renovation work at a site. Leaf build-up, mowed lawn build-up, adding sand or 'fill' to a site, trenching for sprinkler lines or other renovation activity that has displaced them.

**"I'm in a park that was built around 1950. I only find coins 70s-current. If people drop coins today...they surely did in the 50s too."**... If you are finding coins that are up to 36 years old (1970 coins), and they are shallow, in the 1"-3" range, then just imagine all of the Mercury dimes and silver quarters and half dollars we were finding in the 1960's and '70's. Those of use that got into this hobby in the "early days" didn't have to deal with zinc cents and very, very few clad coins because they hadn't been out for long.

The parks and schools I was working with my brother in 1968 (the first year I went from a home-built detector to a factory-produced White's Ghost Towner BFO) kicked out countless coins! If you just apply the '36 year' comparison to your current finds, that means we were likely to get coins back to 1932. Quite honestly, I would say the bulk of what we were finding easily dated in the 1920's, 1930's and 1940's.

The reasons where that the parks and schools had been around for quite a while, and had seen a lot of human activity, especially following WWII. After the last great war there was a very pronounced growth in "family activity" all over the country. many families were seen picnicking in the parks. Dad's & Mom's, Grandpa & Grandma, all the kids and grandkids. Most avid detectorists today I think date to that 'family' era in one way or another.

There was a lot of baseball played, as well as some football, and we can't

forget other activities. Let's also remember that in those day we wore very loose pants with shallow pockets, and often carried larger, heavier coins (silver dollars, silver halves, and a fair number of silver quarters, and I think many of the heavier coins came out in the frolicking. Kids carried smaller change a lot in order to buy the penny candy, the 5¢ and 10¢ sodas, make a 5¢ phone call perhaps. Parks, especially, saw a good deal of family activity in the '20s and 30's, with a surge in the late 40's and through the 50's and most of the 60's.

What I am getting at here is that there certainly was a lot of coin loss from that era, but even though our early detectors lacked balance, comfort, ground cancellation and discrimination abilities, they were still capable of finding coins from surface to 3" or so.

A park built in the 1950's would probably not have much in the way of older coins (unless it was used a lot prior to becoming a formal park) so an inviting site would have been pretty well pluck thin by all the folks who detected there, especially during the big surge in the hobby from about 1973 thru 1983, and perhaps by a few even into the mid-to-late 1960's. The result? You get to find the more recent losses of coins and modern-day trash.

**"Most of my coins are 1-3 inches usually."**... Which is the norm. Today you could say that most in-use sites have a lot of coins in the surface to 4" range.

There are some folks who 'specialize' in doing some serious **"Silver Shooting"** and they are careful to select a detector model that has the potential, to get a little better depth, and one that might have a reasonably accurate Target ID and Coin Depth gauge to help them locate the older coins that have been missed through the years. Maybe just a little bit deeper than many have searched or cared to go after, or a little deeper than other's detectors could 'ID.'

The coins might be/might have been on some bad angle or located close to a small iron trash object or 🤪, or possibly they have been missed because the ones who frequented the site just searched way too fast and didn't overlap, or maybe they used too much discrimination or not enough sensitivity?

Whatever the reason, there are still some deeper, older coins to be found and, depending upon the detector and coil, these are the coins that are an *honest* 5" or 6" or maybe even 7" or 8" coin. Most of my more serious "deep coin" hunting in parks and schools has been done with a White's XL Pro, but if I was to dedicate one detector model to that task it is a (sorry

White's) Minelab Explorer II.

That doesn't mean that the Explorer II is the best all purpose detector, however, because I hunt with dedicated Minelab 'silver shooters' and I will out-hunt them with my modified Classic III SL, XLT or other favored White's but it all depends on the site. I have the better tools, with my White's Classic's or Shadow X5, for hunting the iron trashed RR ghost towns. They find stuff, no doubt, but there's no perfect detector for every application.

I seriously hope White's will have a new model out soon that can compete with the depth performance of the Minelab Explorer because I am quite partial to White's. I want a serious White's "*Silver Shooter*" to work those older parks and schools and courthouse lawns for the deeper silver. Just laying there in that 5" to 8" range awaiting recovery.

If you want older coins, search for older sites. Remember that this hobby has been around for a while, and has had the greatest amount of interest and activity since the surge started about 1970, so there have been 36 years that thousands and thousands of very avid detectorists have been trying to thin out the same parks and schools we visit today. Most of what you'll find is newer because most of the older stuff is gone. Most of the older coins that are still there are masked by shallower coins and modern-day trash and/or are just deep enough that it's more difficult to get an easy 'hit' or good Target ID lock-on.

Be patient. Do some research. Use a smaller coil to handle the trash. Use a stock coil for open areas. Keep your discrimination low and your sensitivity as high as tolerable and stable.

**Monte**