

Fisher F-75: First Impression

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It's not often a new machine gets my attention very quickly. I usually watch and wait for the reports, read the forums, listen to the feedback, and talk to the new users. I am comfortable with the small arsenal of machines I currently have and I was in no hurry to purchase a new F-75, but sometimes fate has a funny way of changing ones plans.

I was invited to hunt with a friend at a military site, and I took my normal relic machine while Mike Scott brought his F-75. I was looking forward to being able to compare targets with this new machine, and see how it stacked up to my machine. As luck would have it we were not always within earshot of each other, but both machines easily registered the targets we did compare. Nothing significant was determined and certainly nothing indicated to me that this new machine was any deeper than what I was using.

This particular site was covered with a lot of forest clutter. The ground was covered with broken branches and tree limbs and other debris. So much so that we would rake an area clean and then detect it. I had cleaned off a new area about 20 foot square, and was the first person to really hunt this particular plot of ground carefully. The targets were numerous and I was very excited to be doing so well. Mike was re-hunting areas already covered previously, preferring to hunt the areas that had already been cleaned of debris. I finished my area after several hours and began to move to adjoining spots when Mike announced he had to leave for several hours, to attend a previous commitment. We both had thought we would call it a day at this point but because of the success we were both having neither of us really wanted to leave. He wanted to come back after his commitment and I certainly wanted to continue hunting so it was an easy decision.

He said he would leave his F-75 for me to use, if I wanted to try it. I was somewhat apprehensive, yet mysteriously excited to be able finally try this new machine and I certainly didn't want to leave this awesome site! It didn't take much convincing to get me to try the F-75.

My first thought was that I really would not know what to listen for or how to operate the unit effectively. I certainly didn't want to handicap myself at such a great site but Mike had everything set on the F-75, all I had to do was hunt. After a quick lesson Mike left and I was on my own. I wandered around, trying to get used to the signals I was hearing, and I must admit I was a little frustrated at first. But within 15 minutes I could tell good from bad targets and after digging a few good buttons I was gaining confidence fast. It was then I realized that what I should be doing is hunting the exact 20-foot area that I had just cleaned out with my other machine. What better way to see if this machine was any better than my detector? I had a cockiness of attitude, believing I might find a few targets my machine might have missed, but I was sure I would not be too surprised. Well, slap me and call me "Shirley"! I spent the next two hours digging target after target in the area I thought I had worked pretty good. I was shocked, surprised, and a bit stunned. How could I have missed so many targets? None were extremely deep, that I recall, but nonetheless, I found half again as much as I had on the first pass with my other machine. I am not a sloppy hunter, I carefully grid my areas and work them carefully, then turn at 90 degrees and work the area again crossing over my previous grid a second time. I may have missed a few targets during my initial sweep using my detector, but certainly not that many. I could only come to one possible conclusion: the F-75 smoked my other machine. Try as I might, I could not justify things any other way.

After several hours, Mike returned and I

relayed my experience to him. He just smiled, having experienced the same thing himself when he first started using the F-75. I reluctantly handed the F-75 back to him, and we both continued to hunt this site for several more hours. We both continued to dig targets, but I couldn't help but wonder what targets I was missing. I am certainly not going to cast aside my favorite machines because of this two-hour comparison, but it convinced me that I need to investigate this machine more. As a dealer, I need to learn this new machine so I can better service my customers. As a user I need to learn this machine to see how well it does on the sites I normally hunt, under the conditions I normally hunt in. Only then will I decide if it's better than what I am currently using.

When I finally received my F-75 I opened the box and was a bit surprised by the "Read This First" instruction page taped to the bag that contained the control housing. Wow, Fisher is actually warning its users that the machine is very sensitive and explains the basics right there on the very first thing you see when you open the box. I then set the manual aside, and quickly assembled my new machine. After all, I am a veteran detectorist; I should be able to figure this machine out without having to read a manual, right? OK, I was a bit mistaken on that part but the actual operation of the machine IS very easy, with only two controls needed to make every adjustment possible, and an on/off/volume control.

I must admit, I was impressed with how easy the F-75 was to adjust and move around the menu's. It is very straightforward and easy to understand and adjust. What is not so evident is what some of the screen abbreviations stand for, so eventually had to open the manual to figure what "bc" and "pf" modes stood for. That said, I realized there was more here than meets the eye, so I sat



down and read the entire manual.

I had a general idea of how this machine worked because of my early experience with Mike's machine, and I spent several weeks reading "Fisher" forum site posts and contacting several other people I knew that had already traded their old machines (the very one that I have been using) for this new F-75. I gleaned a few secrets and suggestions, and re-read the manual again. All of this occurred during my early hours of using the F-75. I instinctively thought that I should crank the sensitivity, you know, to see what the machine could do (in spite of what the manual instructs you to do), but I quickly learned that is not the approach you can use with this machine. Like other really sensitive machines, one must temper your belief that "more is better" and really follow the instructions in the manual. You really need to run the sensitivity as high as you can, but still keep the machine stable and relatively quiet. That may mean turning the sensitivity down but on this machine even "low" sensitivity can be much greater than what you are used to seeing on other machines. Trust me on this, pay no attention to what number setting you have it on, run it where its smooth and quiet, at least until you learn the machine and have a few hours under your belt. At some sites you can run it higher than at others, it depends on the conditions and interference encountered. Let the machine dictate where you set the controls so it runs smooth and quiet.

My primary passion is relic hunting so my observations will revolve around that aspect of the hobby. From what I can tell this machine really is a jack of all trades, good for relics, coins, beach hunting, gold hunting, it does it all. Reports posted on some of the metal detecting forums point this out as well.

I will save all the boring details about the sites I visited, but they are sites that I have been hunting for years. Some I consider "picked clean" and rarely find targets any more. Others still give occasional goodies, but its getting harder and harder to make finds. I have several ghost town sites that now consist of crop and grazing lands, a stage stop site, and of course one military

site. Each site I took it to I was able to detect some targets. At some sites I was pleasantly surprised, and at one site I found virtually nothing.

At one ghost town site, I found a toe cleat, spoon parts, several musket balls and a small button, and a number of pieces of lead splash. I was mildly impressed; this was the most targets I had pulled from this site in years. I also found a nice 1838 seated half dime! Not sure how I missed that before but the F-75 had pulled more for me in 5 hours than I had found in my last 5 trips to this site. It was a good day, and I was happy.

My next spot was a stage stop, again a site that I alone have hammered to death. This site yielded coins back to 1797 in the past but on my last three trips here I dug almost nothing. This really was a favorite spot of mine but I was slowly accepting the fact that I had hunted it out. Two trips here with the F-75 gave up some very small targets, but nothing deep.

This past weekend I was again in the company of my friend Mike, and he and I hit the same site I wrote about earlier. Excitement was high as we walked to the site, discussing what our best plan of action would be. We both figured that we had done a good job the last time and that we would probably have to move to a different location because last time we spent the whole day digging in a 40 square yard area. We were both there a good 6-7 hours and had roamed all over the area numerous times. If there were any targets left, it sure wouldn't be very many. Mike began hunting in the same spot we already worked, and I ventured a bit further away. Mike was digging targets while I was not, so after an hour I too moved back to the

"hot spot".

Again I will save you all the details but we ended up spending the entire day in the same general area, slowly working around it, listening for the faint singles. I tried various settings, but usually ended up with hunting in JE mode, sensitivity all the way up to 95, two tone mode, with disc turn all the way down to 4. With this setup, I was able to hear all of the iron targets, but more importantly also hear the high "zip" of good targets mixed in with the iron. By keeping the disc low it seemed like the masking affect of iron was minimized, or in some cases gone all together. It was not uncommon to dig good targets out a hole with multiple iron targets.

We were both surprised by the fact that we were still finding targets in the exact same area that we hammered weeks before. Granted, they were deeper, smaller, and weaker signals, but we were still digging a lot of targets. I should also mention that this site contains a LOT OF IRON! We spent 9 more hours hunting the exact same area, but then, there was no reason to leave since we kept digging good targets. I ended up with 28 swan shot, 13 pieces of misc. lead splash, 8 large musket balls, part of a cuff link, and 18 buttons. Oh yes, and one coin, but I will come back to that in a bit. The buttons consisted of 5 large pewter 4-hole buttons, two one-piece flat buttons, a kepi button, two two-piece brass eagle cuffs (one Artillery and one Dragoon), four one-piece eagle cuffs in pewter and one one-piece eagle coat button, and four pewter general service (US) buttons! The "US" is visible on all of the general service buttons and the dragoon was my very first! Mike's take was a little bit better than mine. Boy, what a day!

There were two distinct finds that I remember, both were US pewter buttons, one I was able to measure the exact distance. It was the full length of my digger



which measures 1 1/4". The second button was at about the same level but what makes both of these two finds interesting is that I pulled a one inch chunk of rusted iron out of the hole, before reaching them at a deeper location.

One other find was memorable: The 1827 bust dime! This too was a very weak signal, a high "zip" buried in the grunt-grunt of iron targets. It was inconsistent and faint, and I actually began to walk away, but only got a few feet away before turning back to find out what it was. Boy am I glad I did! It was about 10" deep. Mike and I whooped it up, high-fived, took some pictures, and then got back to business.

I now have many hours on the F-75 and

I must say, this machine is very easy to use, right out of the box. It is sensitive, no question about it and a bit different than what the hobby is used to, but easy to master in a short period of time. Because it's sensitive, some may find it intimidating, but trust me when I tell you with proper instruction and some tips from your dealer, you too can experience the power of this very versatile machine. I am of the belief at this point, that Dave Johnson and his team of engineers sat down one day and brainstormed the following concept: what would the perfect coin/relic/gold machine be like? What features would it have? What features would the users want? They came up with a blueprint, then decided on which

of those ideas they could actually achieve, and the result is the F-75. In principle at least, it seems like the perfect, all around machine. I am by no means an expert, but I really like what I see and I think I will be studying this machine for awhile. So the best advice I can give anyone trying this machine is to take your time, be patient, and give it some time before you decide. This machine may not be for everyone but those that take the time to learn it will do very well.