

Calgary Metal Detecting Club

The Buzzer

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This image is another reminder of so many great relics found around the Calgary area. This 1940 National Parks Pass Buffalo was found in Calgary June of 2004, but many other Buffalo parks passes have been recovered by members of the CMDC over the years! Our great hobby brings so much history back to light!

**The Buzzer is published by and for the membership of the CMDC –
Canada's oldest active metal detecting club.
Visit us on the internet @ www.cmdc.org.**

July 2024 – Moving Onward to New Adventures

By Peggy Kemp



In June of 2011, I wrote my first issue of the CMDC newsletter – The Buzzer. The front page had a tongue-in-cheek picture of Jose Chong using his Fisher Detector with his “bigfoot coil” at a club hunt, with the caption “Bigfoot Spotted”, a story about Randy Poirier moving out to Ontario, and James Belke sent in a story about finding a crotal bell in Edmonton. It was the first of many adventures with the Buzzer.

I have enjoyed being the Buzzer editor for the last 13 years. Its been great way to exercise my creativity in putting together the Buzzer every few months. It was a challenge doing the research and pulling together enough articles to make up the newsletter sometimes, but I enjoyed every minute. I've been amazed at some of the things I have learned – like military badge and button dating, that bicycle headplates and bullet cartridge headstamps are a thing, and different methods of cleaning coins - to name only a few. But its time to step away for new projects. I know that Amanda West will do a great job as the new Buzzer editor.

I will still be around the CMDC and will still be writing articles for Amanda to consider for use in the Buzzer. I want to take the time to thank all the CMDC members who have contributed to the Buzzer over the years. Some of you were previous Buzzer editors, and others contributed articles and story ideas. Each contribution helped make the Buzzer into the newsletter / mini-magazine it is today.

Thanks for the memories – Its been a great run. I hope you all continue to help out Amanda as she takes the reins of our great little magazine. Thank you all for allowing me to be a part of your metal detecting adventure in reading the Buzzer for the past 13 years! If you want to review some of the older issues – they have been archived on the Facebook group site and on our club website at CMDC.org. I hope you all enjoy the Buzzer this month, and every new issue that comes out!



Detectorists - Helping the Environment

Detecting is a lot of fun, but we do dig up a lot of not-so-fun stuff. We live in a "disposable" society, and a lot of trash gets dropped and buried over time. Many detectorists dream of finding an old homestead “dump site” and finding some of those treasures. While it isn't fun digging up pull-tabs, bottle caps, bits of aluminum cans, foil packages, and other bits of trash that people toss on the ground - we know that the good stuff will come. Who hasn't cussed at a signal that came in so strong – only to have it end up being a wad of can-slaw, or a bit of copper piping. That same signal could just as easily have been a ring or a coin. So we dig it up - and if its trash - we carry it out.

Detectorists don't get enough attention for what they do to help clean our trashy environment. But that doesn't mean we should stop. Our CMDC club members have quietly filled in badly dug detectorist plugs, and sometimes even picked up another detectorist's trash left beside their plug, or picked up extra trash near their own hunt site. Kudos to all of you who follow our code of ethics! I think that we detectorists are a lot more environmentally conscious, or "greener", than a lot of the general population. As a rule, detectorists "clean the environment, one pull-tab at a time".

Blast from the Past

TELUS SPARKS HOBBY NIGHT – JANUARY 2013



This CMDC was invited to take part in a “Telus Sparks” Science Center for a hobby night demonstration in January of 2013. The original story was published in the Buzzer in March of that year.

Early in January the Club was approached by a representative from the TELUS Sparks Science center to do a presentation on our hobby at their adults-only evening. TELUS Sparks hosts an adults-only evening at the new science center building on the second Thursday of every month, and the theme for the January event was "Hobbies".

Several members of the club showed up to take part in the evening, held on January 10th . Some members brought displays of recovered finds, which impressed many of those attending. Club members brought their detectors, and many different models were on display. Club president Andy Coward created a power-point slideshow of different finds and club activities.

There were a few hands-on demonstrations, and explanations of the technology. One of the favorite parts of the evening was a kiddie-pool filled with cotton batting. Participants could search through the cotton using pinpointers, and discover both treasures and trash hidden within. The guests involved in the Science Center evening seemed quite impressed by the CMDC set-up, and many showed a real interest in our hobby.

Thanks go out to all of the Club Members who took the time at very short notice, and made the evening a great success.



CACHE HUNTING TIPS

You will hear metal detectorists talk in awe of finding a “Cache”. A cache is a deliberately hidden treasure trove, usually consisting of valuables or coins. They are not common now, although you will find an article in the January 2015 Buzzer of Bill Jones and Jim Culver finding over 1600 pennies (and a few toys) in an area between two trees. From the dates on the coins, Bill believed the cache was buried by kids in the 1970s.

In the past many people did not have banks within a reasonable distance, or didn't trust banks, so they would hide their valuables around their property. A cache is not likely to be found in a park. Remember that in past times, a cache was considered "safe-keeping". The people intended to find it again. It is most likely to find a cache somewhere close to a residence or some location where it can be checked often.

There are a few general rules when searching for hidden treasures around houses. Most people would hide their valuables in an area that could be viewed from a major window (bedroom or kitchen). Often they would leave themselves a clue, like a nail in a tree with the cache buried below, or a fence post that is taller than the rest. When cache-hunting, note that most caches are buried one or two feet deep. People wanted to have easy access to their money. You want to keep your sensitivity high enough for those deeper signals. If you are hunting a long-abandoned home, sometimes people would hide their caches in the basement or the root cellar.

Another thing to note is that caches don't usually “sound good”. A cache can sound like anything – commonly mason jars, or old tins (lard or coffee tins were popular) were used for buried caches. You might get a hint of silver, but usually you are going to hear the metal from the tin-can or the jar lid. Many of these sounds are discriminated out by modern detectors. If you are deliberately searching for a cache you want to hunt in “all-metal”, otherwise you are likely to miss the target. A large amount of silver and gold in a tin box will sound like the box. Your detector will not pick up most caches unless you're operating with the iron discrimination off.

TIP OF THE DAY

Don't be afraid to dig trash. Sometimes discriminating out signals seems like a good idea, but you run the risk of missing good finds. Remember a gold ring shows up as a pull tab or a chunk of tinfoil on most detectors. Also, cleaning out trash targets in an older area may bring out some better signals hiding below the trash.

Old driveways or parking areas can be great hunt locations. Sometimes an old parking area or driveway can be discerned from clues around the area (there may building or sidewalks). The ground around old parking areas will usually be very hard to dig, and many have a dense concentration of small rocks. If you find an area like this, hunt it. Old gravel parking lots, like those around 1940s and 1950s schools, tend to have shallow targets as they cannot sink. Most items will be very close to the surface. If you think you've hit a parking area, hunt the area on lower sensitivity, as the targets should mostly be shallow. Keys pulled out of pockets or purses sometimes bring other items with them. Silver coins, mid-century lipstick tubes, jewelry and even an old hood ornament or car decoration can show up in places like this. There may be some damage to targets from being driven over, but I've seen some nice old coins and jewellery come out of parking areas.

SMI Prospecting Closed

I recently discovered that CMDC sponsor “SMI Prospecting and Electronics” closed earlier this year. SMI had been a minor sponsor of the club for the past 6 years, providing a bit of swag for some of our activities. The death of one of the partners and health issues in recent years caused the business to shut its doors after over 30 years of operation in early Spring of 2024. Thanks to the guys at SMI for their support over the years.

HOW TO CREATE A TEST GARDEN

Some of you will have heard about the idea of a Metal Detecting “Test Garden” as a point of conversation at some CMDC club meetings. Many consider it the best way to learn your detector. Most of you have probably never heard of a test garden prior to entering into the hobby of metal detecting, so here is a description and some basic instruction on how to create your own detecting “Test Garden”.

A test garden can be created to help you learn the capabilities of your detector and educate yourself about what you intend to find. It will help you learn your detector by giving some basic understanding of the signals it gives when it encounters various metals and depths. A test garden will also help you understand the effects of ground minerals, moisture content, target angle, oxidation/rust, trash proximity, and metal type. It also provides an area to practice target pinpointing and selecting the right area to dig.

First of all, select the area for your “garden”, and then use your metal detector to find and remove every bit of metal from the area. The next step is to select the metal targets to “seed” your garden. Choose targets such as various coins (clad, copper and silver), a bottle cap, a pull tab, some lead, some can-slaw and other objects of different metals and a few nails. Also select a small jar filled with scrap copper and a large tin-can. Note: Do not use your good silver coins in a test garden. Find the cruddiest silver coins you have – the ground won’t know the difference. Also, your Test Garden doesn’t have to be an exclusive use area – you can plant other items (like marigolds, tulips or pansies or vegetables). If you are planting vegetation, we suggest something that stays low to the ground, and doesn’t prohibit swinging.

Bury all these objects in rows about two or three feet apart. You have to make sure you space the items well enough apart that the signals you are testing don’t overlap. Bury coins at varying depths, beginning at two inches. Continue, with the deepest buried 8 to 10 inches deep. Bury another coin at about two inches but stand it on edge, another coin at about three inches, etc. If you want, bury some gold in the garden, but remember that this is a long-term proposition. You aren’t going to be digging it up anytime soon. Bury the jar at twelve inches to the top of its lid. Bury the large can with the lid one to two feet below the surface. These are your “Cache” test areas. Old-timers would use an old coffee tin or mason jar to bury their treasure in. That is another sound you want to learn. You can also plant a rusty nail next to a silver coin to see what that sounds like. This is a great use for some of the “trash-finds” that fill our pouches.

The next step is to create an itemized and detailed map or drawing of what you planted, and the depth the items are buried at. The target locations should be marked with colored non-metallic objects. Plastic or resin garden row labels will work fine, as will color wood golf tees, or plastic flags.

The purpose of the buried coins is to familiarize you with their characteristic sound. The jar and large can will help you learn to recognize "dull" sounds of large, deeply buried objects. Experiment with different sizes of search coils as well as different program settings of your detector. Your test garden is important because your success in scanning over it will be a measure of how well you are progressing and how well you have learned your equipment. Remember that you must make an accurate map and keep it up to date when you change and/or add to your test garden.

One of the biggest mistakes people make is to create the garden and try to use it right away. You have to let the garden rest a while. A recently buried item will respond differently from an item that has had time to affect the soil around it. Let your garden “mellow awhile and give items time to permit a metallic “halo” to work into through the soil. This so called "Halo Effect" is a process where, over time, coins or other metallic objects become electrically more associated with surrounding earth materials. In some cases the molecules of metal begin to "leak" into the surrounding soil. Some of you may have tried to dig a great sounding silver sound, only to find a rusty nail – and then found that the “silver” sound disappeared as soon as the ground was disturbed. That is because of the “halo effect” of the rusted iron affecting leaching into the ground balance around it.

The information in this article was gleaned from multiple different websites, but the following websites can provide some great information and valuable hints about creating your own test garden.

http://metaldetectingworld.com/test_garden.shtml,

<https://focusspeed.com/build-metal-detector-test-garden>

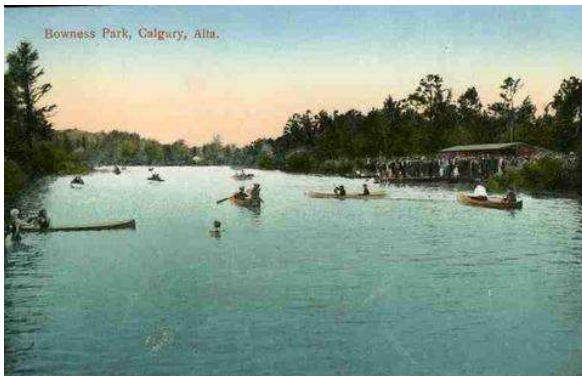
HISTORY FOUND THROUGH POSTCARDS

Knowing where people congregated in the past is a big step in finding where long-lost items might be recovered. In early Canadian postal service history, it cost less money to mail a postcard than to mail a letter, and many people took advantage of that. There are post-cards of many historical areas of Calgary that show early life and areas where people congregated for fun and recreation. Often postcards were created for tourists – but were also created for special events like the Stampede, or for club picnics or family reunions.

The postcards below all date from the 1920s through the 1940s, and show Calgary Parks and other areas that were in use over 50 years ago. These postcards were found on the online historical postcard archive of the Calgary Public Library. Another great place to locate historical photos is the Glenbow Museum photographic archive, which is now housed by the University of Calgary digital collections.

Glenbow Museum Photo Archive: now available through U of C digital collections

Calgary Library Postcard Archive: <https://www.calgarylibrary.ca/read-learn-and-explore/digital-library/williams-and-harris-shared-history-centre/>



Bowness Park – 1920s



Central Park 1920s



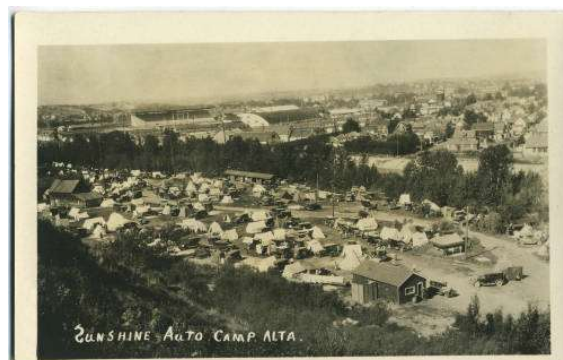
Elbow Blvd Park SW (now Woods Park) 1930s



Elbow Park (now River Park) 1940s



**Future Neighbourhood of Riverside
(now called Bridgeland)**



**Sunshine Auto Camp (1920s)
located to the East of Stampede Park, near Victoria Park.**

FINDING TREASURES

The hope of finding amazing treasures causes many people to venture into the hobby of metal detecting – Some people think that everything they find is going to be exciting and interesting! Those people may be discouraged from metal detecting when they see the amount of trash that is dug up. They might wonder if the bit of change or bling jewelry is worth it. In some cases, their metal detector ends up in a closet gathering dust. Sometimes people have the wrong idea about treasure – thinking of Spanish gold in Calgary, Alberta.

When you're out metal detecting, don't expect to only find precious metals or costly antiques. Understand that in the society we live in, you are going to dig up a lot of junk! There's just no way to get around it - bottle caps, tinfoil and pull-tabs are everywhere. Typically, after a day of detecting, you'll wind up tossing a fair amount into the garbage bin. Sometimes, what you toss could be someone else's idea of treasure. I'm thrilled to find a copper lipstick tube or compact, even though I know that in dug condition it has no real monetary value.

Part of the treasure is the experience. This hobby isn't all about what you find - a day outside enjoying the weather, and those small keepers at the end of the day are all part of the adventure. Sometimes the treasure is the memories of a great day enjoying the hobby. We know that there are treasures - I have seen some wish list items like wagon licenses, gold rings, old advertising spoons, National Park plates – all found around Calgary. Don't be daunted by the trash – understand that it is a part of the process, but there are always going to be cool things to find. As for the trash – detecting is one of the few hobbies that is cleaning the environment.

As for relics and treasure – we all still want those special finds. A lot of target recovery involves the process of research - one way to locate possible hunt locations is to research places around your area where coins or relics might have been lost. Metal detecting is a bit like real estate – half of the battle is finding the right “location”. If you want to find “treasures”, you have to hunt in places where those items might be located. The local library may have books with local histories on their shelves, or can order them in. The internet is another great resource. With the growth of interest in history and genealogy as a hobby, there are websites with digitized newspapers and community histories. Do a bit of research – you might be surprised at what you learn.

When I got into the hobby I researched my local community. I was able to locate an old railway station and two old 4-room schools within a 10-minute drive from my 1970s neighborhood. I recovered some cool mid-century items and WWII era buttons because of that research. I also dug up silver coins and jewelry as the schools had multiple decades of use. If you are hunting an older area – take a good luck at what is heading into the trash bag. Is it possible that the item you are thinking about tossing out actually a relic? Something that might be tossed could actually be very old, and worth a second look.

If you know of a good location that you think has been hunted out - don't count it out just yet. Try going back and detecting the site in early spring or after a rain - when the ground is soaked. Wet ground has more conductivity, and this might allow you to gather previously missed hidden treasures.

Another great idea is to look for a local metal detecting club, or join some metal detecting forums on the internet. A club like the CMDC is a great place to learn a lot about the hobby from other detectorists. If researching new spots is not your forte, join a metal detecting club. Many metal detecting clubs organize hunts several times a month that you can join. At a club hunt, a lot of the work is done for you. Someone else has done the research and selected the site. The only thing you need to do is to pack your gear and go.

Metal detecting takes more skill than just running around chasing a beeping sound. You really have to take the time to learn your hobby. Do your research and get involved in a club. Being involved in a club will not only give you valuable sites to go detecting, it offers the opportunity to meet and talk with other people who are into metal detecting. You could gain tips for research, and techniques for digging up your next great find.

Vancouver Island Detectorist Unearths History

Tim Barkasy got his first metal detector as a birthday gift from his children a decade ago. He took it for a spin that day, and was shocked to find two Canadian coins from the mid-1800s within the first hour using his new detector. "It was enough to be hooked and wanting to find the next thing," he said of his inaugural outing around Willows Beach near Victoria. Barkasy says the southern parts of Vancouver Island are a jackpot for hidden history.

Barkasy is a plumber by trade, but most evenings he likes to let his thoughts drift as his machine sounds off trash and treasure through a pair of headphones. He has found many items, some of them historic and valuable, hunting the beaches and parks around South Vancouver Island.

Mr. Barkasy has recovered many Canadian and American coins, some dating from the mid-1800s. He also found an American gold coin, and coins from around the world. Other finds include medallions, tokens, rings, skeleton keys, old make-up compacts and old bullets. He is a member of a local metal detecting club, and many of the other members have recovered other finds from Victoria's past. Tim Barkasy appreciates history and has donated a number of recovered items to museums, including a 1947 Canadian Briar championship ring which was shipped to a museum in Ottawa.

Local historian John Adams is not surprised by the finds that Tim Barkasy and his club have found. Adams says it is likely that the ground in the old port city may hold more history than other parts of B.C. He notes that apart from Indigenous peoples who traded goods on the island, ships landed around Victoria as early as the 1700s, and British colonizers began settling the island in the mid-1800s. The city of Victoria started off as a Hudson's Bay trading fort in 1843, and enticed fur traders to bring their goods to the island. A few years later, the Royal Navy established itself in Esquimalt, where British marines travelled from countries where they'd been stationed previously. Many of them certainly carried international currency..



Metal Detecting – 2022 was a Record Year in Britain

The British museum say that public metal-detecting has contributed to the archaeological finds and treasures reports located across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. They note that there were more than 53,000 archaeological finds and over 1300 treasure cases recorded in 2022. This is the highest number ever reported in a single year in the United Kingdom.


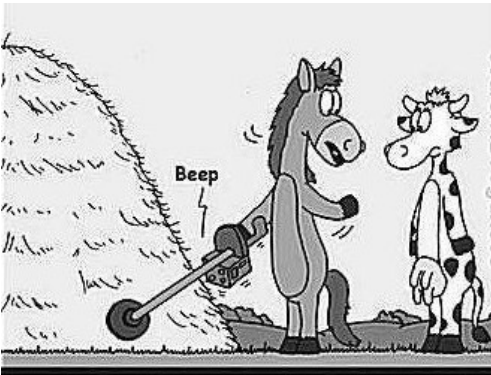

The British Museum's Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) acknowledges that members of the public, namely those metal detecting on cultivated land, have most contributed to the increase in finds. While some archaeologists cringe at lost context, the fact is that most of the current finds ending up in museums for public display have been recovered by detectorists with a passion for history. Some of those detectorist finds have provided archeology departments and museums with new locations for archeological study.

Among notable finds in 2022, the British Museum highlights a carved bone rosary bead, a 3,000-year-old gold 'dress fastener' from Staffordshire, and a hoard of 26 Iron Age gold coins found at East Garston, West Berkshire. Mark Jones, Interim Director of the British Museum, thanked the metal-detecting community in particular for its efforts.

LOCATION AND MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

With the end of Covid – in-person meetings are being scheduled for the upcoming months. CMDC meetings will be held at the Horton Road Legion and are scheduled for the first Thursday of every month. The meeting dates will be published on the CMDC.org website calendar, on the CMDC Facebook group page. We look forward to seeing you at an upcoming meeting.

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR SPONSORS

<p>GPS Central & RadioWorld Central</p> <p>Metal Detectors, GPS Units, Radios, and other electrical equipment & tools. Visit them on the web at gpscentral.ca , or the store at:</p> <p>#8, 711 - 48 Avenue SE Calgary AB Canada T2G 4X2 403-239-1400</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The CMDC's yearly dues are:</p> <p>In-town membership: \$30.00 Out-of-town membership: \$25.00 Family Membership \$45.00</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Contact the Calgary Metal Detecting Club (CMDC) By email at email: cmdc.club@gmail.com</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">CIR Realtor – Relocation Specialist</p> <div style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 10px; text-align: center;">  <p>Kevin Niefer <i>See Below</i></p> <p>1Finding Houses - Creating Homes 403-968-1496</p> </div> <p>To find out more information send Kevin an email @, or give him a call at 403-968-1496</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">YOU COULD BE A PUBLISHED AUTHOR!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Do you have an interesting story, An idea for an article, or a comment that you would like to see in “The Buzzer”?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Write it down and email it to cmdc.club@gmail.com with</p> <p style="text-align: center;">METAL DETECTING STORY in the subject area.</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">You were right: There's a needle in this haystack..</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ANDY COWARD Custom Coin Jewellery</p> <p style="text-align: center;">COINS2RINGS</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Facebook - coins2rings2 IG - @coins2rings Email coin2rings2@gmail.com</p>
