

Calgary Metal Detecting Club

# THE BUZZER

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Nice Day for a Hunt!

We're all looking forward to an early spring!

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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](http://www.cmdc.org).

# THREE FISHSCALE DAY

By ALEX MIOC

Alex Mioc is member of the CMDC, and had a fantastic first year of metal detecting with over 70 silver coins recovered, including these three fishscale 5-cent pieces found in one day!

Alex first published the story of this hunt on the Alberta Metal Detecting Forum. It has been slightly edited for the Buzzer.

In early November of 2011, I went out detecting to a park that I have hunted before and ended up with an insane result.

My first find was a 1902 dime, and then a 1900 dime - followed by two more dimes (1953 and 1943). I was very excited, but nothing got me prepared for what was to follow....

MY FIRST FISHSCALE 5-CENT PIECE! YEAH!

“One more off my list!” I said. 🤩

I went a few more steps, and I pulled out my second 5-cent piece in a matter of minutes. O.M.G. 🤩 It's crazy enough to find one, never mind finding TWO fishscale 5-cent pieces in a day... The first was a 1919, followed by a 1916.

“What an insane day!” I said. “I never hoped to find one 5-cent piece. Who's gonna believe me that I found two in one day???”

So, I am at silver #6 for the day, and crazy with excitement...when...I found THE THIRD 5-CENT PIECE, ALL JUST MINUTES APART! 🤩



I was in disbelief, and I am still trying to remember my numbers on the e-trac. What a day.... I not only took one more coin off my wish-list, but times 3 in the same day. The next one my list is dollar.

Hey dollar, here I come! Be ready...to see the light.

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## Fishscale Facts

Up until 1921 the 5-cent piece was about half the size and half the thickness of a dime. This makes it one of the hardest coins to find with a metal detector, and also makes it a much sought after coin on many a detectorist's wish list. Canadians who used the coins thought the early 5-cent pieces resembled the scales of a fish because of their tiny size, and gleaming silver appearance. That is how the 5-cent piece got the nickname, “fishscale”.

In 1921 the 5-cent piece was changed to the current size and made of nickel (hence the name). That year both sizes of the 5-cent piece were released by the mint, but most of them were the larger size “nickels”. The number of the fishscale silver 5-cent pieces released in 1921 was small, and they are very rare. Two Members of the Calgary Metal Detecting Club have recovered 1921 fishscale nickels over the 40 years the club has been active. Each was worth over \$5,000.00 dollars.

## ALBERTA'S OWN MYSTERY MINE

The story of the Lost Lemon Mine has been called “the great mystery of the Canadian Rockies”. As the story has been around for well over a century there are, by now, many versions of “the truth” but all begin in 1870 at Tobacco Plains, Montana and end not far from Calgary.

Legend has it that a party of prospectors made their way from the outpost in Montana to the Highwood Range. Two men from the group, Frank Lemon and his partner, a man known as “Blackjack”, set out on a route of their own. As the two men made their way along the trail the pair was gratified to notice showings-outcroppings that indicated veins of gold below the surface of the ground that they were traversing.

Not wanting to share their find with anyone else from the original party, Lemon and Blackjack quickly gathered as many pieces of gold ore as they could. They knew they would need these samples in order to attract someone to bankroll a potential mining operation. Once they had amassed a sizeable stock-pile of ore samples, the pair set up camp for the night. They planned to head back to Montana early the next morning.

Several variations of the tale exist to explain what might have happened next. Some say Blackjack and Lemon got into an argument that escalated into a physical fight. Others say that the two were on good terms when they turned in for the night. What is known is that by sunrise Blackjack was dead – murdered by his former friend and partner, Frank Lemon. As for Lemon, overnight, he had gone stark raving mad.

According to one version of the story, the badly deranged Lemon left the body of his former friend where it lay and headed back to Tobacco Plains. When he got there he sought counsel from the local priest and confessed his terrible crime. He believed that this confession would free him from the ghost of Blackjack, which Lemon was sure had been haunting him from the moment that he'd killed the man.

It would seem that Blackjack's ghost, not wanting Lemon to profit from his foul deed, had decided to spoil his former friend's plan by appearing as a ghost and literally, frightening Lemon out of his wits. Throughout the long night after he'd committed the murder, Lemon had been terrorized by ghostly moans and the sight of disembodied glowing eyes glaring at him. Blackjack's angry spirit tormented the murderer until the guilty man had gone completely insane.

The following spring, Lemon was thought to be well enough to join an expedition to stake a claim in the Highwood area. The party was not successful, for the closer Lemon got to the place where he'd killed his friend, the more insane he became. Eventually the group gave up and returned to Montana where they made arrangements to send Lemon to his brother's ranch in Texas. It is said that Lemon lived there until his death many years later, but never recovered. To his death Frank Lemon believed that Blackjack was haunting him.

The story became a favourite told by the camp-fire, and caused much speculation. Some researchers believe it to be a fanciful tale, but over the last century thousands of expeditions have been launched to try to discover the location of this lost mother-lode. There are records of these searches in the Calgary Herald in the 1920s and 1930s. Many have searched for it, some have even died for it, but no one has found the infamous Lost Lemon Mine. Even today, almost 150 years later, prospectors go out each summer searching the area between Montana and the Highwood River. They all hope to discover their own place in history by being the one to locate the notorious “Lost Lemon Mine.”

# POCKET SPILL IN BOWNESS PARK

By ANDY COWARD

This story dates back to the 2009 metal detecting season, and is the tale of a pretty spectacular find at the First CMDC club hunt of 2009. Andy Coward won an award for “Best Coin of the Year” for 2009 for the Morgan silver Dollar in this story. It was awarded at the 2010 CMDC Awards Banquet. This story was first published (and can still be found) on the Canadian Metal Detecting Forum.

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The day started early (8AM) in late April as 8 members from the Calgary Metal Detecting Club met at Bowness Park for our first Club Hunt of the 2009 metal detecting season. This park has been a recreational area for Calgarians since the late 1800s. The weather was plus 6 degrees Celsius and overcast, and was expected to worsen as the day progressed.

After a quick photo-op, CMDC Club members spread out in all directions. I took a little extra time in the parking lot to help one of our new members fine tune his machine, and gave him a few tips. Then I headed out in my own direction.

After an hour and a half of “doing poorly” even by my meagre standards, I decided to wander a little more and try some areas under trees, but with no success. I finally decided to try along the “rails” of a kiddie train which runs through Bowness Park in the summer time.



I had been scanning only a minute or so when I got a very BIG sound in my headphones and the display on my Garrett 1350 indicated the highest notch on the scale – it said “Silver Dollar”. When I pinpointed, my machine said the depth was 8.5 or 9 inches. I tried several times to get a different reading, but just couldn’t.

So dig I did! And dug, and dug! I dug through sod, 3 inches of rock (rail bed), and four inches of dirt until I saw this (the picture above to the left) staring up at me. When I saw part of a wreath and the word “Dollar” I almost crapped.



I immediately went to find some of the other club members hunting nearby so I could share the excitement of the recovery with them. When we returned I had the two other members check to see what they thought lay hidden beneath the dirt. Both concurred it was deep silver! When I pulled out a US 1901-O Morgan Dollar, each person stood staring at the coin in my hand.

Amazingly, after scanning the hole there was another signal! Some careful widening and excavation turned up a semi-toasted Buffalo Nickel from 1918. Some more scanning yielded yet another signal – and I recovered a Canadian Quarter from 1918. Three Firsts for me! All in one hole!



**MY KEEPERS FROM A VERY MEMORABLE DAY!**

Well, that pretty much wrapped up the hunt for me. I think I was shaking as I headed back to the parking area to meet back with the rest of the Club! We all compared finds, and there were some prizes allotted in different categories. After that a few club members stayed on to hunt a little more until the promised “worse” weather arrived, and it started to snow/rain.



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## UK Detectorists called “Unsung Heroes of Heritage”

A missing gold finial from the Sedgeford torc, excavated almost in its entirety more than 40 years ago, and a stash of Viking silver bracelets that may have helped finance an attack on Dublin were among a glittering hoard of treasure disclosed in January 2007, the discovery of amateurs and their metal detectors. British culture minister, David Lammy, called metal detectorists "the unsung heroes of the UK's heritage", a phrase that will cause a sharp intake of breath among some archaeologists who still regard them as little better than legalised looters.

However, in most parts of the UK a truce is in place, with archaeologists and hobbyists working together, a code of conduct agreed by both sides. The amateurs, in fact, are often called in to help at excavation sites, valued for their equipment and expertise at telling a buried coin from a can ring-pull. The outcome has been a spectacular increase in reported finds, with finds of "treasure", gold and silver, and bronze hoards - which, by law, must be reported. "We have a situation without parallel in Europe," said Neil MacGregor, director of the British Museum, which reported the finds. "Without doubt these finds are rewriting history."

It is the less valuable finds which often put flesh on the bones of history for archaeologists. A beautiful little bronze dog, dating from the 4th century and still shiny from years of being stroked, was found by Alan Rowe, a children's books illustrator, who relaxes by taking his metal detector out into the fields near his home on the Isle of Wight.

The Viking silver, made up of a twisted silver rod, 21 bracelets, and a single heavy silver ingot, was found in the remains of a battered lead box. Steve Reynoldson, who discovered it in a field in Cheshire, had been at the weekend rally of a metal detecting club, on land that had yielded nothing more exciting than a few medieval pennies. He found scraps of lead about a foot below the turf. The bracelets so closely resemble silver items from the spectacular Cuerdale Viking hoard - 8,600 pieces found by workmen near Preston in 1840 and now in the British Museum - that tests will be done to see if they came from the same workshop.

The famous Sedgeford torc, found in 1965, has now been reunited with its lost part, thanks again to the work of amateur detectorists. The torc was lost in equally interesting times, with the Romans on the doorstep and rival local and invading tribes jostling for power in East Anglia. A heavy Iron Age necklace made about 2,100 years ago, of 25 metres of twisted gold and silver alloy wire, the torc had been missing one of its beautifully decorated finials - until Easter 2004 when Steve Hammond, out walking with a metal detector, found it, about 400 metres from the site of the necklace itself.

This article (in a larger version) was printed in the UK newspaper "the Guardian" in January of 2009.

Since this article was printed in early 2009, many more historically valuable finds were discovered by Metal Detecting Hobbyists in Britain – who reported their finds to the authorities. These finds include 2 Roman hoards, one with 10,000 coins in Shropshire, and another with over 52,000 coins in Somerset. Other important Metal Detecting hobbyist finds were the recovery of 5 iron-age gold torc necklaces found near Stirling in Scotland, and the famous Staffordshire Hoard.

Some of these spectacular finds have had far-reaching impacts and could re-write what British Historians know about previous eras of life in the UK. The recovery of the Stirling gold torcs led to an archaeological dig, uncovering the remnants of an ancient wooden roundhouse. British Archaeologists from Birmingham also excavated the site around the area of the Staffordshire find. Both of these finds have impacted the historical understanding about the times they were lost. The Stirling find appears to reveal unexpected links with other Iron Age people in Europe, and archaeologists researching the Staffordshire Hoard indicate that the find will change Historical views of mediaeval events.



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## ❄️❄️ Winter Metal Detecting ❄️❄️

For many of us the Calgary Metal Detecting season is at an end, but you do not have to give up your favourite hobby just because it is winter. There are a few hardy souls that go out detecting every month of the year, and come home with some pretty spectacular finds. Even in winter there are treasures to find, and there are people to be helped. Several of our members have taken time out of their busy lives to locate a missing ring, pendant, or set of keys lost in the snow. In Calgary we do get some nice chinooks and very sunny days in the winter. Even though the ground can be pretty hard to dig into, there are still some nice finds to be made. In fact, CMDC Club president Andy Coward found one of his nicest rings in a snowbank in early January. If you do plan on metal detecting during the winter months, here are a few basic rules for warmth and safety.

It is important to dress for the Weather. It is important to go out dressed for not only the weather of the moment, but prepared for the weather in the forecast. Remember – this is Calgary. If you don't like the weather, wait a minute. It will change. Before you go out for a winter hunt, familiarize yourself with the signs of hypothermia. Watch yourself, and those you hunt with. Make a plan to take a break someplace warm if someone's health seems at risk.

Always have a cell phone with you, especially on a trip to an isolated area. In the case of an unexpected event (getting stuck in the snow) it is important to have a way to get help. If you are going to detect an isolated area, make sure someone knows where you are. Either hunt with a partner, or let someone know where you plan to hunt.

Plan your winter treasure hunt as a recovery of surface or near surface finds. The winter chilled earth will require some vigorous digging if you are trying to retrieve something deeper than that - which could damage whatever you are trying to find. If you suspect that deeper object has historical value, or is a precious metal, make a note of landmarks or of the GPS location and plan for recovery when the weather is warmer, and the ground softer.

Spring will be here soon. We have already seen the back of the shortest day of the year, and are less than four months to the beginning of our metal detecting season (we hope). So while winter doesn't necessarily mean the end to our season – it also a great time to do research and make plans for future hunts. And remember the CMDC still meets during the winter. Its a great time to get together and talk about our hobby. I hope to see you all out at the next meeting.



## Location and Membership Information

The club meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 7:30 pm in the auditorium of the Brentwood Co-op store which is located just off Crowchild Trail between Charleswood Drive and Brisbois Drive N.W. You have to enter the store and go down-stairs to the meeting room.

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## YOU COULD BE A PUBLISHED AUTHOR!

Do you have an interesting story, idea for an article, or a comment that you would like to see in "The Buzzer". Write it down and email it to [kemp@telus.net](mailto:kemp@telus.net) with METAL DETECTING STORY in the subject area.