

Lost Treasure

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Lost Treasure Presents: Manufacturer Profiles - OKM



Manufacturer's Profile

OKM



OKM GmbH is a company name that is probably not known by the vast majority of North American treasure hunters or prospectors; however, OKM has been designing and building innovative equipment for more than a decade that has allowed worldwide users to discover countless treasures and artifacts, dating back 1,000's of years, and naturally-occurring metals and minerals, as well as tunnels, caves and other non-metallic targets.

OKM does not build the conventional metal detectors one typically sees in the local parks, schoolyards, beaches or even wooded areas containing smaller relics. OKM recog-

nized there are many quality hand-held detectors available that perform exceptionally well when searching for small items or those buried close to the surface and opted to focus on another segment of the end users.

The market they have focused on almost exclusively since their inception has been the design and fabrication of equipment that allows users to literally see into the ground at depths previously unreachable when using a metal detector, although they do have metal detectors in their product line and are working on some new models with innovative features for possible future release.

Their equipment is in the class of

equipment classified as geophysical instruments and has, in fact, been used successfully in archeological, industrial, prospecting, oil exploration and, yes, treasure hunting applications for a number of years.

The OKM factory is located near the small German town of Altenburg, which is situated in what had been East Germany until the wall came down in 1989. While under Communist rule, treasure hunting of any form was not allowed except by government personnel conducting official business and, as a result, even basic metal detectors were unheard of until Germany was reunited.

To show that there are treasure



The staff of OKM GmbH outside the current factory.



Some of OKM's products on display in the showroom / training room at the factory.

hunters in all parts of the world, Andreas Krauss, the founder of OKM, sought out a metal detector as soon as they were available and started searching the areas surrounding his home town for lost valuables.

While old coins, relics and jewelry were readily found due to the lack of competition at that time, Andreas gravitated towards searching out hidden caches and other objects lost or hidden over the centuries that, in many cases, exceeded the depth capabilities of conventional metal detectors. As the old saying goes, "Necessity is the Mother of Invention," and Andreas saw a need for something different to search for these objects.

With a background that started under Russian occupation that was about as far from equipment design as possible, Andreas became a self-taught electrical engineer. He obtained the services of a highly talented computer programmer, Christian Becker, a university student at the time, to assist in the design of his first project.

In two short months the first model was ready and Andreas started making finds on a regular basis. While the new equipment detected metal objects at depths that exceeded that of two-box models, it also allowed the user to identify voids, such as caves, tunnels or, in the

case of Europe, military bunkers and civilian bomb shelters, as well as non-metallic objects, such as clay containers, buried tombs (located in support of archeological surveys) or even wooden boxes through the signature produced within the computer software developed by Christian.

Initially building units in his garage, as some of the U.S. metal detector manufacturers did when they started decades earlier, Andreas and his engineers worked to improve the performance, user-interface and features on subsequent models.

In 2001, a partner joined the company, Ingolf Mueller, and OKM Ortungstechnik GbR, a Private Partnership, was created. In 2002, the company became a Limited Liability Partnership under the name OKM Ortungstechnik Krauß und Müller GmbH and, in 2010, the name was shortened to the current OKM GmbH, which consists of the initials of O for Ortungstechnik (which is German for "locating technique"), K for Krauss and M for Mueller.

With the additional resources the partnership made available, OKM accelerated their development efforts and were able to design new units that met the requests and needs of a growing international market.

Andreas related an interesting side note regarding the partnership, which was that Ingolf also owned several equipment rental companies and

the ready access to equipment, such as bobcats and backhoes, became an asset when using the company's equipment and locating targets with depths measured in meters rather than inches.

As the company began to grow, they looked for outlets in which to advertise their product line, but with no treasure-hunting magazine published in the former East Germany, they started a magazine entitled "Striges." Interest grew and, in 2001, Andreas was invited to give a demonstration of the equipment at a German treasure-hunting club.

Unbeknownst to Andreas, the club had invited members of the press to attend the demonstration and once the stories of how the equipment performed began to circulate, calls came in for their equipment from across Europe and beyond.

When the new company became a partnership, it moved from Andreas's garage into the buildings it has occupied for the past decade, and the additional space allowed the staff to grow and support the increasing worldwide demand for their products.

As the company has experienced continual growth since it was founded, it was recognized that their current facilities were becoming limiting, due to the demands placed on the operation, and ground was broken recently on a new complex



slated to open in mid-2012.

The new building incorporates Andreas's interest in Egyptian history, seen throughout the current factory, as well as his home in terms of decor and the OKM logo. It is being built in the shape of a glass-sided pyramid with a pair of sphinx statues at the entrance to the facility... measuring some 92 feet high, it will be one of the tallest buildings in the area and likely the only gold-colored glass pyramid in all of Germany!

Following the German manufacturing model seen in most companies throughout the country, OKM does not outsource any of their fabrication, but rather builds all of their components by hand, including circuit boards and injection modeled cases and coils, as well as their innovative proprietary software. They then triple-test the completed product before it leaves the factory for the customer.

Andreas said OKM's goal was "to introduce a truly innovative piece of equipment or major enhancement to their software every year"... not simply a repackaging of existing technology or finding a new use for products already in their product line, but rather an idea or product that genuinely advances the metal detection or underground surveying field.

Looking at the progression of their line over the years, it is clear that this goal has been borne out as a result of the efforts of the OKM staff.

Despite the fact that, when the current partnership was formed in 2001, Ingolf was not already an avid treasure hunter, he has become well versed in all of the equipment they

produce and actively travels to promote its use and train others on its in-field application.

The entire OKM team can field questions that come in from users around the world and it is this broad knowledge that enables OKM to provide free, lifetime technical support and interpretation of scans that come in for all four corners of the globe.

Since the equipment does require some experience to be able to get consistent results (as with most high-end metal detectors as well), OKM provides several options for users, including detailed operating manuals, instructional videos available in DVD-format or online through their website, and hands-on training either at the OKM factory or at the user's actual location.

As a matter of fact, Frank Casser – one of OKM's technical trainers – mentioned that his passport was running out of blank pages as a result of the international travel he had done in the first nine months of 2011 conducting on-site training and surveys for their customers.

The software used by most of OKM's products (Visualizer 3D) has evolved over the years to provide users with a truly unique "picture" of what lies beneath the surface being searched. Not only does it allow one to determine what the target's likely composition is (ferrous, non-ferrous, cavity / void), but also the object's depth, position, and size with surprising accuracy.

Scan data can be viewed and processed in the field via a laptop, at home, or sent to the factory for assistance in interpreting the information before actual recovery work begins.

OKM's customer base is split, with about 80% being hobby users and the remaining 20% being industrial, large-scale mining, or military users with customers that include the U.S. Army, NASA and the Canadian Mining Ministry.

Their equipment has been used to locate objects that range from priceless treasures hidden or lost 1,000's of years ago, valuables hidden as war swept across countries time-and-time again, and relics made from all types of metals, to buried structures dating back centuries, caves, underground pipelines and other anomalies that would otherwise have remained undiscovered.

OKM GmbH has had an extremely interesting history and appears to be heading for an even more interesting future as they continue to develop new and innovative products for both the hobby and professional markets. It will be worth watching to see what they bring out in the coming years and what finds are uncovered with their equipment worldwide.

For more information on their product line visit the OKM website, which includes a wealth of information including operating manuals, instructional videos and technical specifications on all of their equipment - <http://www.OKMMetalDetectors.com>

Additional information on their Visualizer 3D software, including sample scans, usage videos and a free trial demo, is available at <http://www.visualizer3d.com>

If you contact OKM, be sure to mention you read about their company and innovative product line in the *Lost Treasure* Newsletter.