

Our Last-minute Treasure Dash and how we got there

We fairly quickly identified the pictures of the gates to Joyce Grove and the kiln in Nettlebed.

Ordering the pages in book order meant these pictures were the first 2 in what we presumed (correctly) to be the route to the treasure. It made sense to start from a place associated with the Flemings and the order of the pictures gave us a rough direction to travel in.

In the absence of any clarity from the main code, we spend numerous hours on Google Earth, looking for what we straight away said “looks like a National Trust ticket booth” (if only we had looked a bit further afield earlier!) We expected to find it fairly close to the kiln. The picture on page 4, with the 2 barn-looking buildings in the background eluded us too. As we could not find either of these 2 buildings, we thought that maybe Starting in Nettlebed was a Red Herring (as we had not decoded the main message).

Nevertheless, two members of our team visited Nettlebed on 27th December for a recce. They started from the gates, passed the kiln and spend the next few hours going around virtually all the roads and footpaths in the village. Having drawn a complete blank, we were then convinced the treasure must be somewhere else. Their trip was not in vain though, as the White Hart serves excellent baked camembert! In the pub they showed the barmaid a photo of the “ticket booth”. They were not aware of its location and we were not the first ones to ask them that question!

Our Google Earth search then switched to Ian Flemings other residences, but none of them had enough significant woodland nearby to be a viable option, so we decided Nettlebed was probably the place, but needed to work on the main code.

We spent most of the final weekend before the closing date trying to crack the code, with Monday 14th set aside to visit wherever we needed to visit. However, our code cracking skills let us down and we were (almost) resigned to yet another year of almost finding the treasure.

On Monday lunchtime I was looking at Google Earth and happened to stumble across a photo of a Chinese bridge at Greys Court (National Trust). As the roof of the booth has an oriental look to it, this immediately got my attention. I still could not spot the booth, but knew where I expected to find it (next to the car park). Afterwards I realised that scrolling back through time in Google Earth, the booth is revealed, when the overhanging tree was much smaller.

As I scrolled around the area on Google Earth I thought I had finally found the elusive barns, a short distance north east of Greys Court. I then spotted the fallen tree on page 9, half way between the barns and Greys Court.

Greys Court was owned by Ian Flemings mother from 1935-37, but we only found that out after finding the treasure, otherwise it would have been an obvious place to look at more closely earlier on.

We decided that we now had the correct location and I set off to Greys Court, hoping the M25 would be kind. Thankfully there was no traffic and I arrived with less than an hour until sunset on the final day of the hunt. Arriving at the car park and seeing the booth from the photo was a great feeling.

We presume the code tells you to drive from Nettlebed to Greys Court, but Nettlebed seems a more appropriate place to start the hunt as it is more identifiable with the Flemings.

Setting off towards the fallen tree *et al*, aided by another team member on the phone, the rest of the photo locations were relatively easy to spot. Until the final one (tree stump on page 11), which took a bit of finding. I decided that if it was further along the same path I had been walking, it must be close to the path, but if it was in the vicinity of the penultimate photo (corner of field on page 7) then it could be a bit further off the path.

Having opted for the easy alternative first, I went up and down the path a few times (including about 10 metres into the undergrowth) before moving back to the corner of the field and heading into the thicker undergrowth. By now the light was starting to fade and I was worried that having got so close the treasure may allude us. I was also not sure how long the National Trust car park would stay open, and really didn't fancy being locked in for the night! So I upped my pace as I worked my way through the brambles and finally struck gold at 1605, about 15 minutes before sunset on the final day. We were very grateful that the final part of the message we had not decoded was not "go 20 metres from the final picture in XYZ direction." I don't think we could have cut it any finer than that!

Thankfully the car park exit was still open and as I got back into my car I started to realise just how many brambles I must have walked through. But the pain was a small price to pay for what was our first successful Pablo's ATH.

Page	Notes	Original Photo	Our Photo
14	Gates to Joyce Grove (former home of Ian's Grandparents and brother)		
10	Brick kiln, Nettlebed		
13	Ticket booth, Greys Court		

9	Fallen tree		
4			
3	Kissing gate		
5	Telegraph pole		
6	Cut off tree		
12	Arrow on tree		

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8	Knobbly tree		
7	Corner of field		
11	Treasure stump		