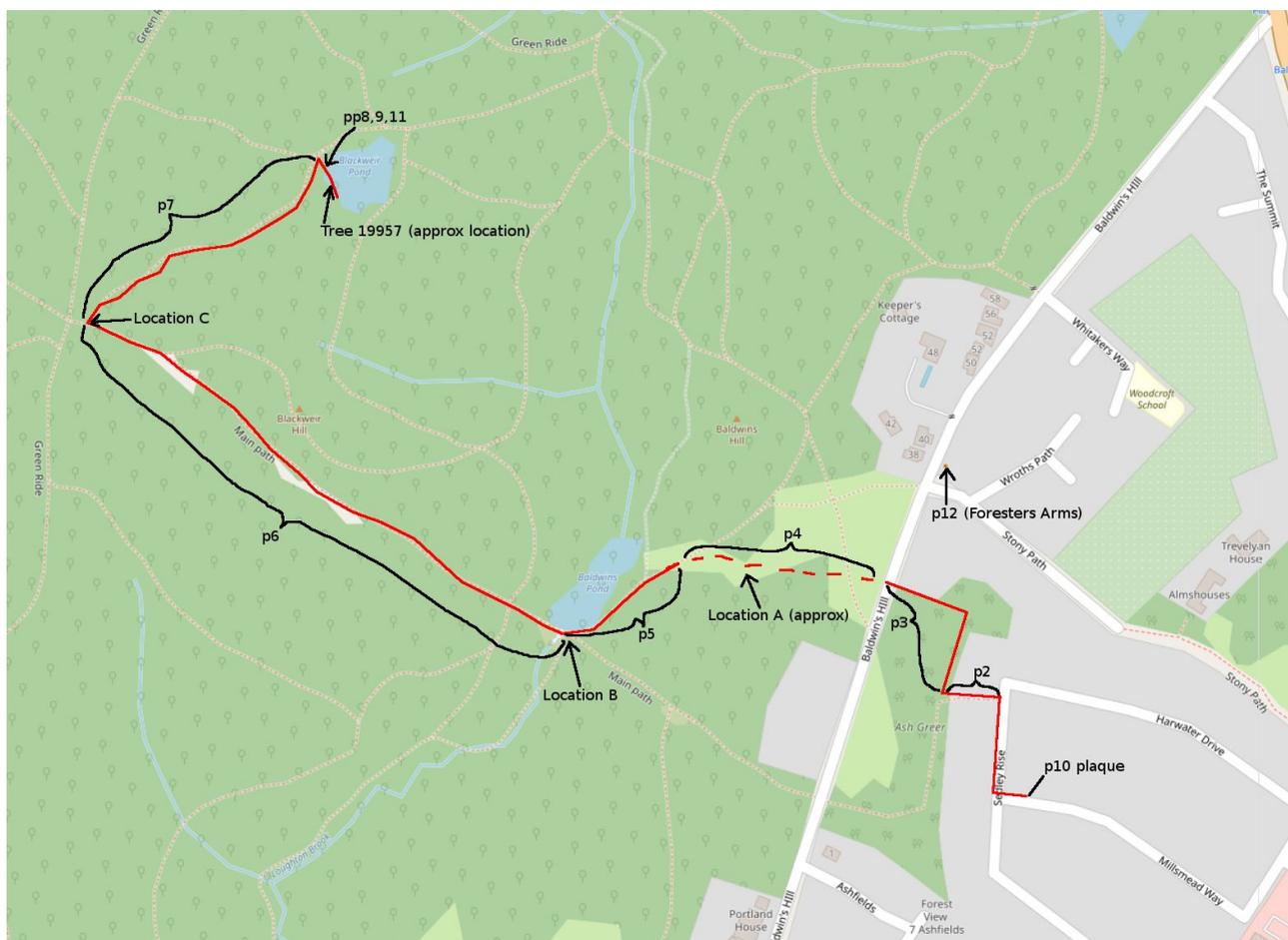


right to Blackweir Pond. Then find the many-trunked tree, whose trunks form a keyhole shape (p9 picture). Then back-up to tree which turns out to have a tag numbered 19957 (as suggested by CXCIX LVII).

Maps

- [OpenStreetMap](#)
- [OS Map](#)



(Not sure of the exact intended routes of p4, p5, but p4 starts and p5 ends in the right places.)

Trip 1 (Sunday 22nd Dec)

On Sunday we had the directions from pages other than 10 which meant we had very detailed directions for finding the treasure apart from the small matter of not having any idea where in the country we should start from. At around 2.30pm, and after a surprising leap of logic, the pieces finally fell into place and we had a starting point: "START AT MY BLUE PLAQUE". We knew by then this referred to Ruth Rendell, so it must mean the blue plaque on her former residence in Loughton.

But there was another problem: which order should the directions be taken in? Obviously not just simple page order, because it had to start with page 10, so we hastily leapt to the conclusion that the correct order would be that of the page-related images on page 1. (At that point, we hadn't realised the Gaboriau/La Dégringolade connection, so thought the first non-'bank' image on page 1 must correspond to Ruth Rendell.) After some puzzlement, we decided it was worth a trip, and hopefully the details would become clearer on the ground. Unfortunately we dithered too much before leaving and only arrived in Loughton at around 4.15pm by which time the light was already significantly failing. We were excited to find the first few landmarks, but we were still confused about the directions and by the time we might have tried venturing into the forest it was around 5pm, properly dark and of course (as extensively advertised) seriously muddy and slippery. We decided to abandon the trip so we may live to fight another day, so we retired to the Foresters' Arms and then went home.

It was not all in vain though because we had seen the order of the first few landmarks, and back in the comfort of our homes we worked out that the proper order of directions must simply be page order, with the exception that page 10 has to come first.

Trip 2 (Monday 23rd Dec)

Fearful of what the competition might have worked out over the weekend, a party of three of us (Alex, Ingrid and Ingrid's father Andy who was visiting from the US over Christmas) decided to make an early start to Monday. I learnt that there are lots of different versions of the start of the day, [as shown here](#): official dawn was at 8:04am, civil twilight at 07:23, nautical twilight at 06:40 and something called astronomical twilight began at 05:59. These last times sounded rather optimistic both in terms of being able to see anything and actually getting out of bed. Even as it was, at least one member of our team got out of bed at a time of the morning they had previously only ever heard spoken of hypothetically.

We ended up in Loughton at around 7:40am and (having studied the route the previous evening) at Blackweir Pond (aka the Lost Pond) at around 7:55am. We found most of the landmarks pretty quickly and learnt that the mysterious roman numerals CXCIXLVII must refer to tree number 19957, after finding similarly-numbered trees, including 19955 and 19956, but for some reason our actual target tree eluded us. Eventually, after about half an hour of getting somewhat painfully "decked by boughs of holly" during what was possibly not the world's most efficient searching, we finally stumbled on it and luckily enough were rewarded with the ticket number 1 and the promised "rich desserts" in the shape of a packet of Oreos. We weren't sure that a packet of biscuits represented such abundant riches given the team's time investment hitherto, but we accepted the nourishment gratefully. Before we set out we were puzzled by the significance of Oreos in this hunt. After finding a packet of them in a tree in Epping Forest we were none the wiser, but at least somewhat fuller.

After taking pictures at the pond and generally celebrating for a bit we then heard the sounds of a dog in the distance and accompanying loud voices. We initially thought it was just dog walkers, since the area is very popular for this, and who would take a dog such a long way just for a bit of treasure hunting? But we soon recognised the voice of someone we knew as Shrek (a self-chosen forum name, incidentally) -- a member of the Psychologicals (aka Armchair Treasure Hunt Club), a very strong team who have won in recent years. We were obviously pleased at having snuck

ahead of them this time (and this made the pre-dawn start actually feel justified), and though they were obviously somewhat disappointed, they were very gracious about it. (Having perused a fair few Ruth Rendell books, we did at one point wonder if we'd escape the forest with the winning ticket after Shrek's rather "boisterous" Rottweiler seemed to be straining at the leash to have a go at someone. But Shrek --- just about --- managed to keep it under control and we made it back in one piece. (One piece each, that is.))



Raffles trying not to look guilty after attempting to eat some of the route pictures before we set off



White lion on Sedley Rise - one of the pictured landmarks



Alex and Ingrid by the runged tree



They weren't kidding about the mud



Fishing

Fishing is free on this water but please observe the following rules:

- A valid rod licence must be held.
- Fishing is not allowed during the close season (15 March - 15 June inclusive).
- No night fishing.
- The following are not to be used: keep nets, carp sacks, live vertebrate bait or nuts, floating baits, lures, spoons, barbed hooks, braided lines or spinners.
- Only 2 rods may be used simultaneously.
- No plants or animals are to be introduced into the water or removed.
- Broken lines must be removed to protect wildlife.

**Please take your
litter home.**

"No nuts or spoons"



The truncated tree



The many-trunked tree



View of tree 19957 through the keyhole



The "red" box with tickets



The Psychologicals, with Shrek's Rottweiler possibly expressing its opinion of us