

ATH 2019 Submission from No Management Potential

Captain Steve Hames



“I said **don’t** touch the Lion’s Mane! Haven’t you read the book?”

Hunters' Tales – No Management Potential

Visit on 28 December

By the evening of 27 December we had solved enough things to justify a visit to Epping Forest:

- Plenty of Ruth Rendell links.
- Rendell started her writing career at 45 Millsmead Way, Loughton, where a blue plaque was unveiled in 2016. This is the start of the Hunt.
- Nearby is the lion in the 'sword' photo.
- Debden at the start of the Enigma message.
- Most of the directions decoded.
- Positive ID on Baldwin's Pond photo in 'treat'.
- Plausible Streetview for the p2 photo: the footpath that heads up between 84 and 86 Sedley Rise, here. (Corner of Sedley Rise and Harwater Drive, IG10 1SJ.)
- Turning right, following the fence and crossing the road makes sense from here. Then downhill to Baldwin's Pool and into the woods.
- And, when clipping a Streetview shot for the proposed meeting-point of the Forester's Arms, a characteristic bicycle!

Our Hunt team parked at the pub at 10:40 on 28 December, quickly passed the runged tree and squelched through the boggy furlong to reach Baldwin's Pond, noting the expected 'no nuts or spoons' notice.



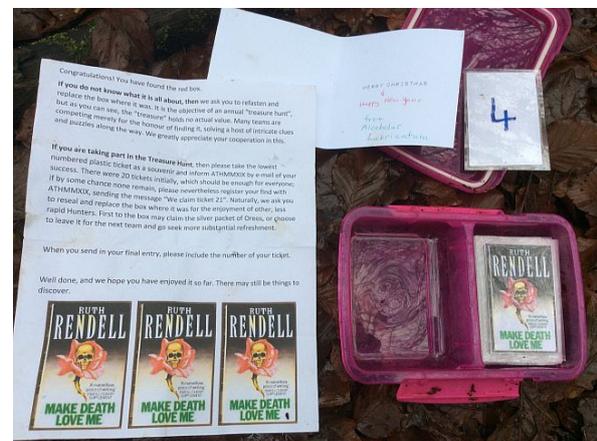
Up the hill beyond, we reached the clearing with a post, and the 'sharp right' exit into the woods.



The path seemed more likely than hacking through the woods but we didn't know how far to go, and were wondering about checking out some of the low earthbanks to the right. But before long the path reached Blackweir Pond, and a familiar truncated tree. Our pre-expedition thoughts were that 'widdershins' had to be interpreted as 'left', because 'anti-clockwise' appeared not to make sense. So left we went, greeting a dog-walker and finding a many-trunked tree, albeit not with a matching keyhole. After checking the numbered metal tags on a few trees in search of either 191 47 or 199 57 (cxixlvii) with no joy, we realised that **anti-clockwise round the pond** did make sense. The dog-walker had gone just about far enough that the change of mind didn't cause too great a loss of face, so widdershins it was. Another many-trunked tree appeared, this time with the desired keyhole, and several large trees to check out. Tree 19957 was soon located (photo shows both the keyhole and the tree), and buried in the leaves in the fork was a foreign object — yes! But no — it was an empty green bottle. A bit more rooting around among the leaves at head-height failed to reveal a box. Were there any other hiding places? There was no option: the tree had to be climbed.

Standing in the fork didn't help: the small holes higher up contained no red box. Back to ground level: no, nothing secreted at the base. It had to be the fork, particularly as that was what the photo showed. And lo, a bit deeper in the leaves was the Treasure. By 11:00, card 4 was ours.

On the way back to the pub we photographed Baldwin's pool looking EWE (the 'WNW' had scuppered an early attempt to match the path and pond with a map of Epping Forest), passed the



bench and returned to the pub. A quick diversion was needed to find the path and the blue plaque, and then the lion — initially dismissed as a red herring, as it was clearly out of place.



Visit on 31 December

We were already aware of the EXIF information in the treasure trail photos so we weren't too surprised by the hint on the letter in the treasure box that there was more to find. But although we had solved quite a lot of the EXIF trail, we were stuck. The 'gAd' message removed one blockage but advanced us only one more step. However, the 'Muddy Boots' announcement on Gordon Banks' birthday made us wonder whether there was anything else in the forest. Could it be that 'widdershins' could also mean 'left' after all, and that 'cxcixlvii' could also mean 19147? We commissioned a second expedition to Blackweir Pond. They failed to find the missing ATHEXIT, and reported no trees in the correct number range. 19147 couldn't be very close.

Visit on 4 January

What else was ambiguous? Ah yes, the distance to the truncated tree, and 'bank'. One set of directions cluing two different trees was a great coincidence, although not one that we put beyond the ingenuity of the setters. But maybe the second one required a broader interpretation? Continuing past Blackweir Pond would bring us to the stream that feeds Baldwin's Pond; that too had a 'bank'. Did it have the other features, and a tree with the appropriate number? Expedition three set out to have a look.

The trees down by the stream did have different numbers, but they still weren't right. More leg-work was required.

Much later, after lots of 196xx, 194xx and 193xx and a few 190xx, we found some trees in the 192xx range. Ah-ha: head back SE and xx decreases. 1918x... 19158... 19153... 19147! Also with a head-high hiding place! But... no treasure. Having come this far, could we nevertheless construct a possible interpretation of the directions? Yes... (all the distances work):



bank and truncated tree



truncated tree



looking to many-trunked tree



keyhole



tag 19147 (above); tree 19147 in context (right), with barren fork and a ditch beyond that has water but no need for a boat.



Some old Costa napkins at the base of the tree (also visible in photo above) was the best that we could offer for ATHEXIT.

It was worth an email though:

Despite your kind message below, some local(-ish) Hunters from team No Management Potential tried and failed to find the appropriate tree on New Year's Eve.

We then realised that there is a further uncertainty in the directions, namely that "sharp right into wood continue to bank" doesn't indicate how far to go. We therefore dispatched an exploration team today, with a rather manufactured excuse and a wider remit. The attached photos record their mission.



Continuing straight through the woods for some 750m beyond the pond, the team came to a bank, and just beyond it was a truncated tree. The bank was rather smaller than expected, particularly after the magnificent example earlier on the trail. [The next] Photo shows the truncated tree better. Left (widdershins) 30 yards was the promised multi-trunked tree, which had the promised keyhole. With mounting excitement, the expedition spied a promising tree nary a chain distant, which bore the fabled tag cxcixlvii. The wider-angle photo (with the multi-trunked tree in the background) shows that the tree had sadly suffered some damage. The hiding place in the fork that mirrored the red box in tree 19957 yielded no document, but some there was some paper at the foot of the tree. Photo gives a close-up. The damage to the tree must have dislodged this valuable document, and it has suffered somewhat from damp.

Although we're delighted to have found this document, we do recommend that any sequels are written on something more substantial than napkins.