



Pablo's Armchair 2025 Treasure Hunt

The Solution

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Whippendell Wood Car Parks 5th January 2026

1 Introduction

You may be pleased to know that this is the last ATH that I plan to set. It is a staggering amount of work; I am not very good at it and my ability to hold it in my head as I try to frame the puzzle is poor. Too often I am going back to repeat work because I have forgotten how I did it! I.e. I am too old.

Like most setters I set an ATH because I think more people should find out about something I find interesting, even if they don't want to... My working life started some years after the Modesty Blaise comic strip (graphic novels¹ to the initiated) appeared in the London Evening Standard (13 May 1963). Originally I got the paper for the chess puzzle by Leonard Barden but soon became hooked on the strip. In 1977 I went to America for a couple of years before joining Logica, when I was often out of London at client sites. So I usually only saw the beginning, middle or end of a Modesty Blaise story, my imagination had to run riot.

For nearly 40 years Peter O'Donnell wrote daily strips for the Evening Standard (10,183 in total). He also wrote eleven Modesty Blaise novels and two collections of short stories, all of which I bought as soon as they were published.

Modesty Blaise effectively bookended my career when on 11 April 2001 the Evening Standard reached the end of Peter O'Donnell's output (he died 3 May 2010). Shortly after I left Logica and became part-time. Around this time the Evening Standard also stopped publishing the brilliant chess puzzle by Leonard Barden². Both were replaced by Sudoku which I am happy to say encouraged me to never pick up the paper again.

I did some Orienteering when I was at university and for a few years after. A great way to improve your navigation skills and get some exercise. I did a few permanent Orienteering courses in the early 70s and was particularly impressed with the one in Whippendell Wood. More people should visit this Wood I thought and it immediately came to mind when I needed a new treasure site. An initial visit was promising, the course was still there, the great storm of 1987 has left several huge fallen trees and there were a lot of potential treasure sites. I particularly wanted to reuse the Bird Box that had had only a few visitors in ATH2015.

One small complication was that getting the OO³ map seemed to involve a visit to a library or Watford Council's offices, and, on visiting, I found that none of them actually had the map! However, I did find the map on the web in a few places (I still had my original). Unfortunately over the 10 years that this hunt has taken to put together all these copies of the map have disappeared from the web, although the markers are still there in the Wood, albeit some are in a worse state than others. I did contact the local

¹ There are multiple copies of the graphic novels out on the web in .cbr format. I have found the exe version of Sumatra PDF to be a viable reader of these files.

² At the time of writing this he was still publishing a chess column in the Guardian and FT at the age of 96!

³ I have always thought that OO is an abbreviation for Orienteering and I have used it throughout ATH2025. Recent research seems to indicate that I am mistaken – apologies. Occasional Orienteers was the club I joined and perhaps that is where I started to use OO as an abbreviation for Orienteering.

OO club to see when a new map might be available and whilst they were helpful they felt the map I was using was too old, a new survey was necessary and they could not confirm that it would be completed in time for my hunt. I did contemplate setting up a dummy club OO site to publish the map until I remembered the Wayback Machine. The Wayback Machine is an initiative of the Internet Archive, a non-profit, building a digital library of Internet sites and other cultural artifacts. I had previously used this machine to find old copies of PablosATH site to answer historical questions from ATHers, so it seemed likely that they might have old OO maps that had once resided on Watford Council's web site, and they did. I was slightly unnerved in October 2024 when the Wayback Machine was hacked and was offline for around a week. So, I devised a contingency plan for ATH2025.

My plan for this hunt was that it should be easier and smaller than some recent hunts. It should be a bit retro as many ATHers seemed to want to hark back to previous "simpler" hunts. So I borrowed the idea of a journey from the first hunt and created several journeys from the last Logica office I visited to Whippendell Wood. None of them actually get to the Wood but I thought that since they all got close you would be able to work it out.

I had a few setbacks in production. The artist from my previous hunt could get no inspiration from the pictures of the Wood and I had to resort to AI assisted digital manipulation. I wanted the web site to introduce the hunt using a Star Wars theme but I could not figure out how to modify the standard video. This was before AI and maybe now it is simpler. At the time I found a website offering online contracts and for £5 a technician in Egypt solved my problem.

I used AI to help me write the considerable volume of Python software and Excel spreadsheets that I found I needed to both create and validate puzzles. I did not use AI to check my questions because I feared it would remember and be too helpful to ATHers. It will be interesting to see what AI makes of this hunt.

Most of this hunt is my work, so blame me if it is not as easy or accessible as I planned. I am particularly grateful to Robin who supplied the large crossword clues and Jeanne who checked my English at every turn and Simon and Ruth who checked my workings with enthusiasm. Special mention also to Dave B who helped me bury the treasure and Bob who consulted on transport related issues.

The figures on the cover of this document are from the penultimate frame of the newspaper strip and hint at the end of an era ...

David Kee

PS I want to dispel one of the myths about setting an ATH. There seem to be a consensus that it takes months and months. This is a myth, from my recent experience I can confirm this to be untrue, it takes years and years. Start now!⁴

⁴ A slight exaggeration, for effect. Whilst true for this hunt, where, apart from the composer crossword, I devised everything myself and only involved others for the critical checking phase. Previous hunts were very much a team effort, my recommended approach, and much shorter.

2 Overview

The hunt consists of:

- Three crosswords:
 - A cryptic crossword using Chambers as its bible.
 - A non-cryptic simple crossword for adults.
 - A non-cryptic crossword with no clues!
- 53 general knowledge questions. 44 have answers with well-defined first letters⁵. Where there is no well-defined answer or a numeric the question number is in italics.
- Several (largely pictorial) journeys running from the start point of King's Place (identified in the Poster) to Whippendell Wood where the treasure is to be found.
- A number of files hidden in the HTML of the web site.
- Cipher text almost exclusively using the Blaise de Vigenère cipher, with a tiny amount of rail fence cipher text. Never have ATH ciphers been so easy or accessible.
- A numbers code describing the route to the treasure that:
 - was intended to be impossible to crack by brute force methods.
 - required several hidden files to be found and solved before it could be cracked (the solution to the audio file was deliberately ambiguous).
- Repeated, and largely unnecessary, use of the word "you". A hint to the "yew" tree at the treasure site.
- The Bird Box used in ATH2015.
- A single theme of Modesty Blaise. A fictional character created by Peter O'Donnell.

The Poster sets the tone for a hunt with multiple modes of transport and a start point of King's Place. The main hunt with its multiple journeys and other references makes it pretty clear that Whippendell Wood (near Watford) is the treasure site. Finding hidden files on Pablo's web site guides you to the treasure. One of the hidden files indicates that the Bird Box from ATH2015 is in use in a minor way.

Most of the puzzles yield characters from the Modesty Blaise canon and these characters populate the lower case character crossword to reveal a hidden file (and a map) and the mechanism for finding hidden files⁶. Solving the sliced up crossword on pages 2-11 yields a hidden file to help solve the numbers cipher at the bottom of pages 2-11. The constituency puzzle reveals another helpful hidden file and the first letter of the answers reveals the algorithm necessary to solve the numbers cipher and find the treasure.

Pretty straightforward really!

⁵ As per many previous treasure hunts, a first letter is the first letter of the surname of the answer if it is a person, otherwise use the first letter of the answer. So where the answer is David Kee the first letter is K, if the answer is Oxford Circus then the first letter is O.

⁶ Note that the Poster had a similar but slightly different mechanism.

Commented [@1]: C2-01 Bird Box from ATH2015 identified as in use

Commented [@2]: C2-02 Modesty Blaise identified as theme

Commented [@3]: C2-03 King's Place identified as start of Journeys

Commented [@4]: C2-04 Whippendell Wood identified as destination of Journeys

3 The Poster



The poster is an image generated by AI. As with much of AI image generation it did not follow my instructions as I intended but the result was better than my instructions so I decided to use it. I have always felt that treasure discovery late at night is the best experience, ideally with a clear sky and no other hunters and AI did take that on board.

The poster is supposed to:

- get you to King’s Place, York Road by Battlebridge Basin on the Regents Canal (the last Logica Office that I visited). A **Logica** connection for this hunt.
- confirm the types of journeys that the main hunt will follow.
- advise hunters that the Bird Box and TV remote controls from ATH2015 can be used.
- be a first indication that Blaise de Vigenère ciphers could be useful.
- be the first hint that “you” is going to be a useful word.
- be the first use of a message hidden in a file on PablosATH.com web site.

Commented [5]: C3-01 Identify King’s Place as an old Logica Office

3.1 King’s Place

- The fish on the side of the bus is a **plaice** and the coat of arms⁷ and wording on the fish implies the King, hence King’s Place.



Commented [6]: C3.1-01 identify plaice as King’s Place

⁷This is a fake coat of arms generated by AI.

- The pillar is on the bridge over the canal at King’s Place.
- The three tunnel entrances are under the canal and across the road from King’s Place.
- The “star constellations” are outlines of canal basins (see below) and the one next to the location pointer is Battlebridge Basin. The location pointer therefore marks King’s Place.



Commented [@7]: C3.1-02 Pillar identified

Commented [@8]: C3.1-03 Tunnel entrances identified

Commented [@9]: C3.1-04 Location pointer usage identified

3.2 Journeys

All the journeys in the main hunt are confirmed by information in the Poster. Although it must be said that without the main hunt most of them are meaningless!

what3words



Commented [@10]: C3.2-01 Identify W3W usage from Bus graphic

Canal

The star constellations are the outlines of 4 canal basins in London. Admittedly all bar Battlebridge are no longer filled with water.



1. The Grosvenor Canal basin is now Victoria Station.
2. The McMurray Canal at the start of the Wandle river as it leaves the Thames at Wandsworth. About the only remaining evidence is an extra-long iron railway bridge on the Windsor Lines that was required to clear the basin and the associated Surrey Iron Railway sidings (which have also disappeared).
3. Battlebridge Basin next to King’s Place.
4. Cumberland Basin, a disused arm of the Regents Canal that is on the east side of Regents Park. It was filled with rubble from bomb damage during the war and is now largely allotments. It was originally known as Jew’s Harp Basin.

Commented [@11]: C3.2-02 Identify Grosvenor Basin

Commented [@12]: C3.2-03 Identify McMurray Canal

Commented [@13]: C3.2-04 Identify Battlebridge Basin

Commented [@14]: C3.2-05 Identify Cumberland Basin

Commented [@15]: C3.2-06 Identify original name as Jew’s Harp

Constituencies

Emily Thornbury MP for Islington South and Finsbury on the side of the bus.

Odd Locations

The Pret A Manger white star. Hinted at by the vertical morse that spells READY TO EAT three times, the English translation.



Commented [@16]: C3.2-07 Identify Emily Thornbury

Bus

The side of a Routemaster bus.

Cycle

The bike on the side of the bus.



Commented [@17]: C3.2-08 Identify White Star as Pret-A-Manger

National Rail

The three tunnel entrances at the end of the King’s Cross platforms are under the canal and across the road from King’s Place.



Commented [@18]: C3.2-09 Identify vertical Morse around White Star as “Ready to eat”, i.e. Pret-A-Manger

Road

The road surface.

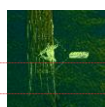


Commented [@19]: C3.2-10 Identify tunnels as King’s Cross and under canal at King’s Place

3.3 Bird Box from ATH2015

There are sledgehammer hints that the Bird Box from ATH2015 will feature in this hunt.

- The giant TV remote.
- The eye on the tree image extracted from the ATH2015 puzzle.
- The decode of the cipher text on the side of the bus.



VIOKHGVMGZLFN

Commented [20]: C3.3-01 TV remote is ATH2015 reference

Commented [21]: C3.3-02 Eye on tree is ATH2015 reference

The eye on the tree has an image at the bottom that was not in the ATH2015 original, a small anchor. This is a convoluted hint that the tree supporting the bird box is a yew tree. Although this will not become clear until much later in the hunt, see 14.2 Anchor Words on page 35.



Commented [22]: C3.3-03 Small anchor on tree indicates yew tree

3.4 Cipher Text and Hidden File

The cipher text on the side of the bus is VIOKHGVMGZLFN. You will have noticed the red and orange logo at the bottom of the far right constellation. This is part of the logo of Key Equity Release and a hint that you need to use this constellation as a cipher key. As noted earlier the constellation is an outline of Cumberland Basin which was originally known as Jew’s Harp. The light at the end of each of the tunnels, if you look closely, are images of Julius Caesar. This is a hint to use multiple Caesar style ciphers, i.e. a Blaise de Vigenère cipher. Using JEWSHARP as the key we get MESSAGEXXVPNG.



Commented [23]: C3.4-01 Bus cipher text decodes with Jew’s Harp to MESSAGEXXPNG

Commented [24]: C3.4-02 Key Equity indicates key to cipher

Commented [25]: C3.4-03 Multiple Caesars indicate Vigenère

So where might you find a file called MESSAGEXXV.PNG? Emily Thornbury is suggesting that you “Get with the News”. It is but a small step to realise that the news is at www.pablosath.com/current/news and a little trial and error to get to www.pablosath.com/current/MESSAGEXXV.PNG. Entering this you get the message:



Commented [26]: C3.4-04 Use “Get with the News” to access hidden file

PATH filename.filetype unknown, both must be lowercase as must be the preceding string.

If you make the necessary corrections you will get another message:

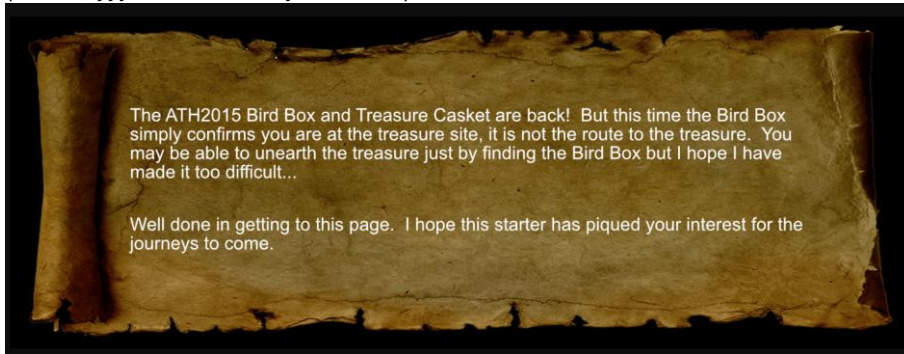
Missing required parameters:
 follow filetype with ?teamname=ttt&yourname=yyy&youremail=eee
 where ttt is your PATH team name, yyy is your name and eee is your email address
 (ttt, yyy and eee can be mixed case, enclose them in double quotes if they contain spaces).

So, enter the following string into a browser:

www.pablosath.com/current/messagexxv.png?teamname=ttt&yourname=yyy&youremail=eee⁸

⁸ Whenever a string for a hidden file is processed by the web site a database is updated and I am able to track ATHers progress.

(with ttt, yyy and eee set to your values) to reveal:



3.5 It could be you

This text on the giant wrist in the sky is an early hint that the word **YOU** might be useful.

Commented [27]: C3.5-01 You might be useful

4 The Videos

There are a couple of videos to introduce the Hunt on the puzzle page.

4.1 Star Wars Video

This video is based on the start of **Star Wars Episode IV**, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNm7A4Q8j4Y>.

Commented [28]: C4.1-01 Identify as a modified Star Wars intro

- 20th Century Fox has been replaced with 21st Century PATH
- Episode IV A NEW HOPE has been replaced with Episode IV A NEW HUNT
- Icons identifying my three previous hunts are shown
- A message mentioning a saxophone and a previous decade is a pretty clear hint to look at my last hunt, **ATH2015**.

Commented [29]: C4.1-02 Identify ATH2015 connection

I was hoping that you would click on this link in a work environment and the Star Wars theme would blare out. Apart from the ATH2015 hints I was hoping you would be pushed towards a Star Wars theme.

4.2 Message from the Setters Video

The second video is admittedly rather strange. There are in fact two videos that run sequentially.

4.2.1 Setter Video Part 1 with Tick Tock Audio

This video is the result of my inability to “*walk and chew gum at the same time*”, or more precisely, tap out Morse while reading a script. I wanted to use an idea from Modesty

Blaise story 90, The Hanging Judge⁹. In this story a captive, knowing that she is to be hanged, is videoed prior to the hanging so that the video can be sent to her parents to maximise their distress. The captive manages to conceal that she is tapping out Morse whilst the video is being taken and this is the key to her rescue by Modesty Blaise.

I wanted to tap out the Morse as I read my script. It turns out that I do not have the coordination skills to do both at the same time and when I look again at story 90 I see that the video was silent and the victim did not need coordination skills.

I decided I would just randomly move my fingers and tap out the Morse to the sound of a ticking clock and its alarm going off. With a bit of luck it would take a while for you to look at my fingers and you would probably come up with all manner of brilliant interpretations which would all be red herrings.

The Morse being tapped out by my right hand (index finger dash, middle finger dot) was NABOO. Hopefully meaningless enough for it to be dismissed. NABOO is a fictional planet in the Star Wars universe and many of the location shots¹⁰ were done in Whippendell Woods! So another hint to Whippendell Woods as the treasure location.

4.2.2 Setter Video Part 2 with Voice Audio

This is another video shot in my front room. You were supposed to notice:

- The Colin Dexter novel “A Remorseful Day”. This is both a hint to the Morse that I am tapping out (Inspector Morse in the novels) and a red herring pointer to Colin Dexter (hence remorseful).
- Two fossils showing a Fibonacci spiral as a hint to my 1996 hunt.
- Snakes and ladders as a hint to my 2000 hunt.
- A globe showing great circles as a hint to my 2015 hunt.
- Two throwing knives and a yawara stick (or kongo), the weapons of choice for Willie Garvin and Modesty Blaise. A clear hint that the 2025 hunt has a Modesty Blaise theme.
- A strange red head artifact. This is a complete red herring. I saw it in a charity shop and thought it was an ideal prize, although I am not sure what for.
- At the end of the table, my collection of MB Novels, Graphic Novels, original art work, etc (perhaps not



Commented [30]: C4.2.1-01 Identify Morse approach as from Blaise story 90.

Commented [31]: C4.2.1-01A Noticed 9535 in video filename as Hanging Judge reference

Commented [32]: C4.2.1-02 Identify Morse as NABOO

Commented [33]: C4.2.1-03 Identify NABOO location as Whippendell Wood

Commented [34]: C4.2.2-01 Identify 1996 Hunt

Commented [35]: C4.2.2-02 Identify 2000 Hunt

Commented [36]: C4.2.2-03 Identify 2015 Hunt

Commented [37]: C4.2.2-04 Identify weapons of MB & Willie

⁹ The eagle eyed will have noticed that the file name of the video starts Video9535. 9535 is the number of the first strip of The Hanging Judge story.

¹⁰ Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace scenes on Naboo were filmed in Whippendell Woods. <https://www.starwarslocations.com/article.php?story=20071008041303639>

noticeable, as titles not visible). A better view is below:



My script was:

Welcome to ATH2025.

1986 was my first hunt and for better or worse I have been hooked ever since. This is the fourth hunt that I have set with my friends.

It is said that everyone has at least one book in them. Maybe the same is true of armchair treasure hunts. In the spring the past setters will be selecting the setter for ATH 2028, please consider putting yourself forward. Setting can be as much fun as competing, so why not throw your hat into the ring.

The second part of the quote that everyone has at least one book in them is “and that is where it should remain”. Maybe this is true of my previous hunts where the treasure proved very elusive. Not this year hopefully. I have tried to make it easier than anything I have set before. You may disagree.

I hope you enjoy your journey to the treasure site and don't forget to read the small print.

5 Title Page

This page is a **view up the hill** from the edge of Whippendell Wood. The GPS data from the image is 51°39'48.8"N 0°26'15.9"W. The Google Maps link is <https://maps.app.goo.gl/YkEnq8FkJCDhKMKd7>. It is near point 11 on the OO map. The image has been scrubbed clean of an identifying footpath finger-post and a waymark symbol on the gatepost but it is probably findable with image search.



Commented [38]: C5-01 Identify location of title page

6 Crossword Slices at top of pages 2-11 (~12)

There are 10 randomly selected horizontal slices of a crossword at the top of pages 2-11. The clues are on page 12, Across 2-39 and Down 1-40. On the unsliced version of the crossword the clue numbers are in random order and not the usually left to right top to bottom ordering. This is so that reassembly of the crossword is non-trivial. It was thought that as clues were solved it would be possible to reconstruct the unsliced crossword, see *14.3 Appendix A Unsliced Crossword on page 38*. I did try to reconstruct the crossword, knowing all the clue answers, and there was a single solution. I was confident that ATHers would find it, eventually.

Some of the crossword boxes contain yellow Caesar heads and others are coloured blue (the same blue as used in the **lower case character crossword** on hunt page 10).

The **Caesar heads** indicate a **Vigenère** code, since a Vigenère code is simply multiple Caesar codes with offsets not necessarily 3. Reading the letters under the heads on the unsliced crossword we get **YVUEDWRUWN**. All the crossword answers are **COMPOSERS** and if that is used as Vigenère cipher key we get WHIPPENDEL. Other references to WHIPPENDELL in the hunt should have convinced you to look beyond page 11 to page 12 where there is another yellow head and a prefilled solution letter, **Z**. If Z is added to the cipher string and the decode repeated we get **WHIPPENDELL**. Apologies for this rather convoluted derivation but I just could not get the software to generate a crossword with Z in the right place.



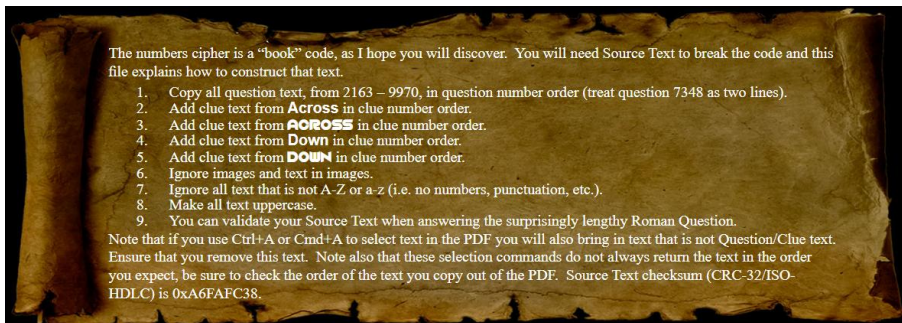
Commented [39]: C6-01 Caesar heads indicate Vigenère cipher

Commented [40]: C6-02 Whippendell decode from Caesar heads

Reading the letters under the crossword boxes coloured blue from the unsliced crossword reveals **SOURCEELMLDGPDF**. I was hoping that you would waste a little time trying to use a Vigenère cipher to decode this text, although the PDF at the end clearly indicates that it is a filename. The name is slightly mangled to make it hard to guess since the file is on PablosATH.com. The **lower case characters crossword** also highlights a blue filename but gives a full site address so that you can access the file. You were expected to appreciate this and use the same approach to access **sourceelmldg.pdf**. The contents of the file are shown below and its use described in *Chapter 14 The Numbers Cipher* on page 34.

Commented [41]: C6-03 Extract SOURCEELMLDGPDF from unsliced crossword

Commented [42]: C6-04 Display SOURCEELMLDG.PDF



7 Morse Code at the Top of Pages 2-11

Originally this hunt was going to have more Morse Code but I ran into production problems. I ended up writing software to generate image strings that I could feed into the Affinity suite¹¹ that I was using to create this hunt. I.e. I ran out of time.

At the top of each page is some Morse code, usually around or near the crossword slices. Sometimes red and sometimes black, never any other colour. The Morse is initially standard international morse. It is often not clear where it starts. It is sometimes vertical instead of horizontal and not always clear if you should start at the top or bottom. Other complications include the removal of letter and word spacing. There is also some morse where the individual dots and dashes of the letters are randomised (this Morse is red and there is a hint, see page 8 below). The table below shows the decode of each set of Morse code, a what3word interpretation and the flavour of Morse used.


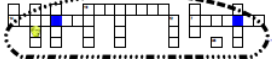
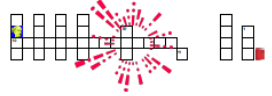

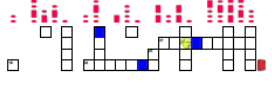

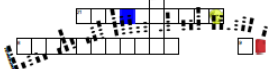
Page	Image	Morse & W3W Decode	Flavour of Morse
2		It is funded if you give to the deaf	Starts top right, clockwise, normal
3		Use a torch to avoid puddles and be called gifted	Starts top right, clockwise, vertical morse, bottom is nearest crossword slice
4		An army cannot be said to run on rare apples	Starts far right, anticlockwise, normal

Commented [43]: C7-01 Extracted funded give deaf

Commented [44]: C7-02 Extracted torch puddles gifted

Commented [45]: C7-03 Extracted army rare apples

¹¹ <https://affinity.serif.com/en-gb/> Note the production problems were mine not Affinity's. Their software was excellent. If you are an inexperienced and infrequent user of graphic design and desktop publishing, as I was, I recommend that you use AI as your guide. I found it invaluable in helping me get started on features I had not used before, or whose location I had forgotten!

5		To stir up is no excuse for a drama	Starts top right, clockwise, normal but with spacing between letters in a word reduced to same spacing as between dots/dashes in a letter
6		A hunter has a fall he is very vocal	Starts bottom right, clockwise, normal but with spacing between letters in a word, and between words, reduced to same spacing as between dots/dashes in a letter
7		Later there was refuse by the posts	Starts at the top, clockwise, vertical but with order of dots and dashes in a letter randomised
8		He would rather die than drop the toast	Starts at the top right, clockwise, normal but with order of dots and dashes in a letter randomised. Note that the letters, RSAHDDNRERE SENSEOWILE SDOOTDASAMZ IHETMODRIIT are a 4 rail fence cipher that decodes to RED MORSE DOTS AND DASHES RANDOMIZED WITHIN LETTERS . Probably an unnecessary hint on how to deal with the red Morse on pages 7,8 and 9..
9		I care if the mime flops	Starts at the left, reads left to right, vertical but with order of dots and dashes in a letter randomised
10		It was a video of manliness in its breath	Starts bottom right, anti-clockwise, normal
11		A museum can be silly but not tasty	Starts on the right and reads right to left, vertical (reading down the page)

Commented [@46]: C7-04 Extracted stir excuse drama

Commented [@47]: C7-05 Extracted hunter fall vocal

Commented [@48]: C7-06 Extracted Later refuse posts

Commented [@49]: C7-07 Extracted rather drop toast

Commented [@50]: C7-08 Decode cipher text to RED MORSE DOTS ...

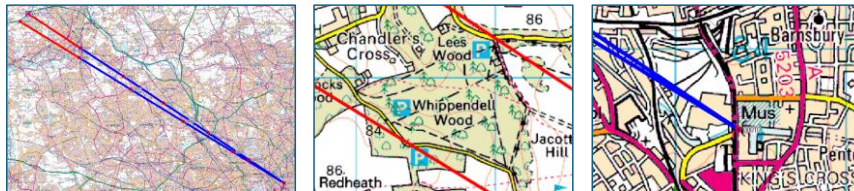
Commented [@51]: C7-09 Extracted care mime flops

Commented [@52]: C7-10 Extracted video manliness breath

Commented [@53]: C7-11 Extracted museum silly tasty

The Morse decode can be inspected for valid words in the What 3 Words location system. These are shown in red above. As far as I can determine only the red words are valid W3W and the rest can be ignored. Apologies if I have got this wrong. Plotting each

of these points gives the blue lines below, I have extended these lines in red to show that they pass either side of **Whippendell Wood**. Looking closely at the start point you can see that it is very close to King's Place, an old Logica office.



If you look even more closely at the start point on Google Maps you can see that it is **TIBERGARDENS** where the lines start/end. You will have noticed that the Morse on page 11 is terminated by a cipher string, **IMORPLERWLRJ**. Using TIBERGARDENS as the key for the cipher string and a Blaise de Vigenère cipher we get **PENNYFEATHER**, another Modesty Blaise character.



Commented [@54]: C7-12 W3W lines straddle Whippendell Wood

Commented [@55]: C7-13 Extracted **PENNYFEATHER** from cipher text at W3W start point

8 The Journeys

The Poster gives a strong impression of **King's Place** as a starting point and identifies several transport options to get from there to, or near to, the treasure site; specifically:

- By **Canal** (including canalized river)
- Through Adjacent **Constituencies**
- Through Linked **Locations**
- By **TfL Bus**
- By **Cycle Route**
- By **National Rail**
- By **Road**

Each of these options is described in the following subsections. Each option gets you as close as the option can to the treasure site but few can actually get there. Most ATHers will pretty quickly realise, from the many references, that the treasure site is Whippendell Wood and so, for example, will not be expecting a National Rail station at the treasure location but will be expecting to be taken to the closest rail station.

A common thread for all the options is that when they finish at their closest point there is a cipher string. This cipher string can be decoded with a Vigenère cipher using the final location as a key. A Vigenère cipher is used extensively in this hunt as it is thematic. The cipher was invented by **Blaise de Vigenère**¹² and our theme is **Modesty**

Commented [@56]: C8-01 King's Place identified as start point of journeys

Commented [@57]: C8-02 Canal journey identified

Commented [@58]: C8-03 Constituency journey identified

Commented [@59]: C8-04 Pret-A-Manger journey identified

Commented [@60]: C8-05 Bus journey identified

Commented [@61]: C8-06 Cycle journey identified

Commented [@62]: C8-07 Rail journey identified

Commented [@63]: C8-08 Road journey identified

Commented [@64]: C8-09 BdV cipher identified as thematic

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blaise_de_Vigen%C3%A8re

Blaise. The table below shows the cipher strings, keys and decodes for all the transport options.

Transport Option	Cipher string	Location Key	Decode
Canal	UVGFBXMADZXEU	IRONBRIDGE	MESSAGEXXVPNG
Constituencies	ZCQTYZTJXZVBLBCXUPNVV	SOUTHWESTHERTFORDSHIRE	HOWARDPRESTEIGNLUCIFER
Locations	BOLLDC	PARADE	MOULAY
TfL Bus	YXARXGYFUOO	STMARYSROAD	GEORGIGOGOL
Cycle	DIDKEXS	HOLYWELL	WUSMITH
National Rail	ZAONRTUJSGJHZDR	WATFORDJUNCTION	DAVIDCRAYTHORPE
Road	PHXBOKFHPEN	WATFORDADAA	THEWATCHMEN



All the decodes, bar the first, are *characters* from Modesty Blaise novels and are used to complete the *lower case characters crossword* on page 10 of the hunt. The first decode is a hidden file name, MESSAGEXXV.PNG¹³. It is the same file that some of you will have already seen from the Poster. The solution to the lower case character crossword describes how to find the hidden file, see *Chapter 11 Lower Case Characters Crossword* on page 29.

8.1 By Canal

Pages 2-11 have canal related images that describe a journey by canal from King’s Place to Ironbridge Lock on the Grand Union Canal as it passes close to Whippendell Wood. Each image is:














- Themed with a light blue colour to distinguish them from other images.
- Has a dot or dash shape.
- Contains morse code.
- Identifies a canal location

The following tables identify the canal locations, translate the Morse to cipher characters and using a Vige nère cipher, with the location as key, decode the Morse.

Page	Image	Location/Key	Explanation
2		BATTLEBRIDGE	This is a sculpture on the edge of Battlebridge basin outside King’s Place on the Regents Canal.
2		BOWCREEK	Heading east on the Regents Canal we go through Limehouse Basin along the Limehouse Cut to the River Lee and Bow Creek where we head south for the Thames

- Commented [65]:** C8-10 decoded MESSAGEXXVPNG
- Commented [66]:** C8-11 MESSAGEXXV.PNG accessed via Archive
- Commented [67]:** C8-12 decoded HOWARD PRESTEIGN LUCIFER
- Commented [68]:** C8-13 decoded MOULAY
- Commented [69]:** C8-14 decoded GEORGI GOGOL
- Commented [70]:** C8-15 decoded WU SMITH
- Commented [71]:** C8-16 decoded DAVID CRAYTHORPE
- Commented [72]:** C8-17 decoded THE WATCHMEN

¹³ It seems likely that no team will find this file using this approach. Late on in the construction of the hunt I decided to use the Morse encircled Ironbridge image as the location of the final instructions for the route to the treasure. I deleted the cipher text UVGFBXMADZXEU that originally occupied that space, forgetting it had a purpose! I should have moved it to above the bridge.

2		DUKES CUT	On the Thames we head upstream towards Oxford until we reach Dukes Cut, a connection to the Oxford Canal.
3		NAPTON	Heading north on the Oxford Canal we get to Napton, famous for its windmill, and join the Grand Union Canal.
3		KINGSNORTON	Take the grand Union Canal to Kingswood Junction and turn onto the Northern Stratford Canal and take that west to King's Norton Junction on the Worcester and Birmingham Canal. <i>King's (chess) Norton (logo of A/V company).</i>
3		GAS STREET	Take the Worcester and Birmingham Canal north to the Birmingham Canal Navigations (BCN) at Gas Street Basin.
4		FARMERS BRIDGE	Head north west out of Gas Steet basin and turn first right down the Farmers Bridge flight of locks.
5		SPAGHETTI	Descend Aston flight to reach the Brimingham and Fazeley Canal under "Spaghetti Junction" at Salford Junction.
6		ATHERSTONE	Take the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal to Fazeley Junction and turn north east toward Atherstone Locks on the Coventry Canal. <i>ATHers tone.</i>
7		HAWKSBURY	Continue along the Coventry Canal to Hawkesbury Junction, also known as Sutton Stop. <i>Hawk cemetery</i>
7		SUTTON STOP	Hawkesbury Junction and Sutton Stop are the same place, hence the triple bar equivalence symbol between them. <i>Image is bus stop outside Sutton Police station.</i>
8		BRAUNSTON	Follow the Northern Oxford Canal to Braunston with its famous (to canal people) church.
9		NORTON	Back on the Grand Union Canal we head east to Norton Junction. <i>Norton (logo m/c company).</i>
10		COWROAST	Continue south on the Grand Union Canal to Cowroast Lock and start the descent into London.
11		IRONBRIDGE	We reach Ironbridge Lock on the Grand Union the nearest significant canal point to Whippendell. <i>Ironbridge at eponymous museum.</i>

Commented [75]: C8.1-3 Dukes Cut identified

Commented [76]: C8.1-4 Napton identified

Commented [77]: C8.1-5 Kings Norton identified

Commented [78]: C8.1-6 Gas Street identified

Commented [79]: C8.1-7 Farmer's Bridge identified

Commented [80]: C8.1-8 Spaghetti Junction identified

Commented [81]: C8.1-9 Atherstone identified

Commented [82]: C8.1-10 Hawkesbury identified

Commented [83]: C8.1-11 Sutton Stop identified

Commented [84]: C8.1-12 Noted that Hawkesbury Junction and Sutton Stop are same place
















Commented [85]: C8.1-13 Braunston identified

Commented [86]: C8.1-14 Norton Junction identified

Commented [87]: C8.1-15 Cowroast identified

Commented [88]: C8.1-16 Ironbridge identified


Page	Image	Morse	Key	Decode
------	-------	-------	-----	--------

2		EIGTSTJCOUOQ	BATTLEBRIDGE	DINAH PILGRIM
2		ESHKTEKX	BOWCREEK	DELICATA
2		IIEVFKYK	DUKES CUT	FOURNIER
3		JIAEWR	NAPTON	WILLIE
3		WIHWGWCESE	KINGSNORTON	MAUDETILLER
3		RAVQCRRIM	GAS STREET	LADY JANET
4		RRJRSKZFIOLRP	FARMERS BRIDGE	MRS FOTHERGILL
5		HPUROEZTV	SPAGHETTI	PAUL HAGAN
6		JTJOWJTGRV	ATHERSTONE	JACK FRASER
7		ZKAOLMINPF	HAWKSBURY	SKEET LOWRY
7		HBBEYEGEZX	SUTTON STOP	PHIL KROLLI
8		NZSNRJLIA	BRAUNSTON	MISTER SUN
9		USDFSE	NORTON	HEMMER
10		JCJVMGMG	COWROAST	HONEYGUN
11		WQMZBELLGW	IRON BRIDGE	OZYMANDIAS

- Commented [@89]:** C8.1-17 decoded Dinah Pilgrim
- Commented [@90]:** C8.1-18 decoded Delicata
- Commented [@91]:** C8.1-19 decoded Fournier
- Commented [@92]:** C8.1-20 decoded willie
- Commented [@93]:** C8.1-21 Decoded Maude Tiller
- Commented [@94]:** C8.1-22 Decoded Lady Janet
- Commented [@95]:** C8.1-23 Decoded Mrs Fothergill
- Commented [@96]:** C8.1-24 decoded Paul Hagan
- Commented [@97]:** C8.1-25 decoded Jack Fraser
- Commented [@98]:** C8.1-26 decoded Skeet Lowry
- Commented [@99]:** C8.1-27 decoded Phil Krolli
- Commented [@100]:** C8.1-28 decoded Mister Sun
- Commented [@101]:** C8.1-29 decoded Hemmer
- Commented [@102]:** C8.1-30 decoded Honeygun
- Commented [@103]:** C8.1-31 decoded Ozymandias
- Commented [@104]:** C8.1-32 decoded GO HERE

The decodes are all characters from the Modesty Blaise novels and graphic novels. These are used to solve the lower case character crossword, see *Chapter 11 Lower Case Characters Crossword* on page 29 for details.

Note also that some of the graphics are bordered in red. The graphics are either dots or dashes and the red border is to indicate the end of a letter. So we have Morse:











 which is **GO HERE**, yet another hint to head for Whippendell.

8.2 Through Adjacent Constituencies

On each of pages 2-11 there is a carefully framed picture. The pictures shown are largely AI generated and hidden in each picture is an outline. Each outline is of a parliamentary constituency. The journey you need to follow is from the constituency where King’s Place is located to the constituency containing Whippendell Wood. Each constituency has an adjacent border with the next in the sequence.

The table below shows the images and the corresponding constituencies with the suffix attached to each picture. The suffix can be used as an offset to derive a letter from the constituency name. If the suffix contains a + or – then that is a modifier to move the offset forwards or backwards to get the desired letter.

Page	Image	Constituency	Suffix	Letter
------	-------	--------------	--------	--------

2		Islington South and Finsbury	7	t
3		Islington North	12	r
4		Hackney North and Stoke Newington	7	y
5		Tottenham	4	t
6		Hornsey and Friern Barnet	1	h
7		Chipping Barnet	3	i
8		Finchley and Golders Green	18	s
9		Brent East	3 +3	h
10		Harrow East	10	t
11		South West Hertfordshire	2 -2	m

Commented [@105]: C8.2-1 Islington S & Finsbury identified

Commented [@106]: C8.2-2 Islington N identified

Commented [@107]: C8.2-3 Hackney N & Stoke Newington identified

Commented [@108]: C8.2-4 Tottenham identified

Commented [@109]: C8.2-5 Hornsey & Friern Barnet identified

Commented [@110]: C8.2-6 Chipping Barnet identified

Commented [@111]: C8.2-7 Finchley & Golders Green identified

Commented [@112]: C8.2-8 WC identified as Westminster constituencies

Commented [@113]: C8.2-9 Brent East identified

Commented [@114]: C8.2-10 Harrow East identified

Commented [@116]: C8.2-11 S W Hertfordshire identified

Commented [@115]: C8.2-12 Image of Watford identified as constituency S W Hertfordshire

The suffixes spell **trythishtm**, clearly a filename. The suffixes are in the same blue as used in the lower case character crossword on page 10 of the hunt. The solution to the crossword describes how to find hidden files, see *Chapter 11 Lower Case Characters Crossword* on page 29 for details. Locating the file, **trythis.htm**¹⁵, on the web site reveals the image shown to the right. The red object is a climber's snow **anchor**. Clicking on the highlighted holes you will hear the words **you**, **yew** and **ewe**. These are the anchor words that you need to crack the numbers cipher. My pronunciation of these words is, unsurprisingly, similar and hopefully there is scope for some misunderstanding.



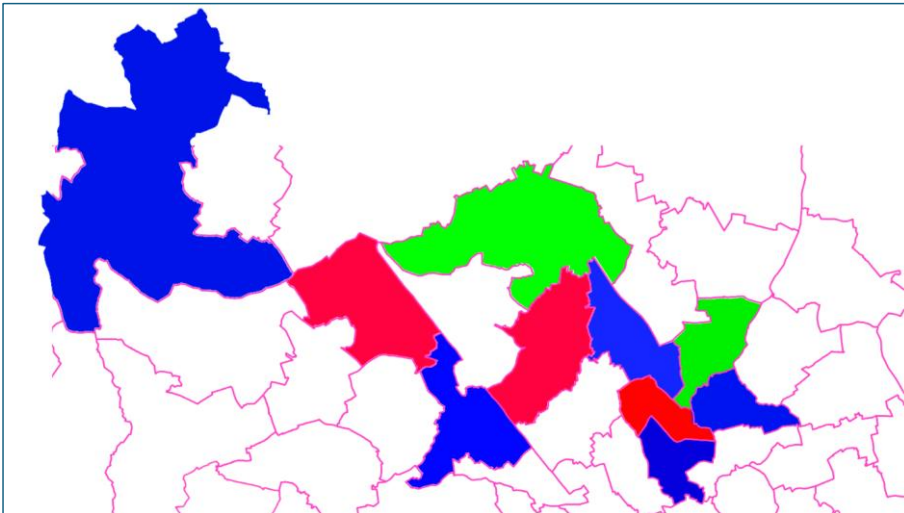
Commented [@117]: C8.2-13 trythishtm decoded

Commented [@118]: C8.2-14 identified as anchor

Commented [@119]: C8.2-15 you, yew & ewe identified










¹⁴ You will notice that this picture has an artist's name, W C Fields. I am trying to give a hint that this is a Westminster Constituency outline in fields. Apologies to everyone who researched the life of W C Fields.
¹⁵ I wanted to use html but the software did not allow it and I could not devise a workaround. As far as I can tell htm files are processed in the same way as html by most browsers.

The image below shows all the adjacent constituencies. I used Westminster Parliamentary Constituencies (4th July 2024) Boundaries UK BFC from the UK Office for National Statistics <https://geoportal.statistics.gov.uk/datasets/ons::westminster-parliamentary-constituencies-july-2024-boundaries-uk-bfc-2/explore?location=51.576788%2C-0.238340%2C10.87>



8.3 Through Linked Locations (Pret A Manger)

This journey is into the past as well as to Whippendell. We are jumping from Pret A Manger to Pret A Manger until we reach one near Whippendell. Just to make it a little more interesting the images with the rounded corners are of a previous occupant of the site. There is also a hidden letter in each image.

Page	Earlier Occupant	Current Pret A Manger	Hidden Letter	Location of hidden letter	Longitude, Latitude	Address
2			P	Above the door.	51.533523, -0.1222636	60 York Way London N1 9AB.
3			E	Orange signage above left corner of building.	51.5231165, -0.158038	211-213 Baker Street NW1 6UY
4			K	Street name on corner of building.	51.4975019, -0.135466	93-95 Victoria Street SW1H 0HW
5			N	In window to right of doorway.	51.494321, -0.1422492	129A Wilton Road Pimlico SW1V 1JZ
6			S	Street name sign, top left.	51.4903914, -0.1618882	Royal Avenue House 35-37 King's Rd SW3 4NB

Commented [@120]: C8.3-1 identified Pret on page 2

Commented [@121]: C8.3-2 identified Pret on page 3

Commented [@122]: C8.3-3 identified Pret on page 4

Commented [@123]: C8.3-4 identified Pret on page 5

Commented [@124]: C8.3-5 identified Pret on page 6

7			Y	On the blue sign on the lamppost.	51.4945795, -0.2126084	117-119 Hammersmith Road W14 0QH
7			C	Highlighted letter.	51.4211033, -0.2070963	4 Wimbledon Hill Rd SW19 7NS
8			O	Barrotts was originally Barratts.	51.5131918, -0.3048299	45 High Street W5 5AW
9			K	bp conneck was originally bp connect.	51.5593908, -0.3980778	465 Victoria Road Ruislip HA4 0EQ
10			E	Right hand side of BrightHouse signage.	51.5814353, -0.3367775	68-70 St. Ann's Road HA1 1JX
11			C	Top left, sticking out from building.	51.656811, -0.3978481	1 The Parade Watford WD17 1LQ

Commented [@125]: C8.3-6 identified 1st Pret on page 7

Commented [@126]: C8.3-7 identified 2nd Pret on page 7

Commented [@127]: C8.3-8 identified Pret on page 8

Commented [@128]: C8.3-9 identified Pret on page 9

Commented [@129]: C8.3-10 identified Pret on page 10

Commented [@130]: C8.3-11 identified Pret on page 11

The hidden letters spell PEKNSYCOKEC which decode to **ANGUSMCBEAL** using a Vigenère cipher with a key of PRETAMANGER. Angus McBeal is a character from Modesty Blaise and is used in the lower case character crossword on Page 10 of the hunt, see *Chapter 11 Lower Case Characters Crossword* on page 29 for details.



Commented [@131]: C8.3-12 Pret hidden letters found

Commented [@132]: C8.3-13 Angus McBeal decode

To the right is a Google map of the Pret a Manger locations.

8.4 By TfL Bus



YXARXGYFUOO

The red used in this image from page 4 is the same red as used on TfL's buses, RGB: 225, 37, 27. The Morse decodes to **DTTGFBNBEEHGOU**. We know the start of the journey is King's Place and there is a bus stop D. The problem is to find bus stop U which must be close to Whippendell Wood.

Commented [@133]: C8.4-1 Bus Morse D T T G F B N B E E H G O U

So following some straightforward rules we get on a bus at D and go to the next stop in the list where we get off and then get on a bus to go to the next stop, and so on until we get to bus stop U. We need the name of bus stop U since it is the

key to decoding the ciphertext under the Morse spiral. This decode is described in *Chapter 8 The Journeys on page 16*.

I think that there is only one possible bus stop U, St Mary's Road. Hopefully I am right and you get there. Below are my workings.

location	stop	route	direction
York Way / Kings Place	D	390	From: Victoria Bus Station To: Archway Station

Commented [@134]: C8.4-2 Bus stop D

Fulbrook Road	TT	134/N20	From: University College Hospital / Euston Rd To: Tally Ho Corner
Highgate Station	G	43/134/234	From: London Bridge Station To: Halliwick Park
Muswell Hill	F	102	From: Brent Cross Shopping Centre To: Edmonton Green Bus Station
Bounds Green Station	BN	184	From: Turnpike Lane Bus Station To: Chesterfield Road
New Barnet Sainsbury's	B	184/307/326/383/626	From: Brimsdown Station To: Barnet Hospital
New Barnet Station / Station Road	E	107/184/307	From: Brimsdown Station To: Barnet Hospital
Barnet Church / Wood Street	E	107	From: New Barnet Station To: Edgware Station
Edgwarebury Gardens	H	107/113/186/288	From: Meadfield To: Queensbury Morrisons
Edgware Station	G	142	From: Brent Cross Shopping Centre To: Watford Junction Railway Station
Farnsworth Drive	O	142	From: Brent Cross Shopping Centre To: Watford Junction Railway Station
St Mary's Road	U	142	From: Brent Cross Shopping Centre To: Watford Junction Railway Station

Commented [@135]: C8.4-3 Bus stop TT

Commented [@136]: C8.4-3 Bus stop G

Commented [@137]: C8.4-4 Bus stop F

Commented [@138]: C8.4-5 Bus stop BN

Commented [@139]: C8.4-5 Bus stop B

Commented [@140]: C8.4-6 Bus stop E

Commented [@141]: C8.4-7 Bus stop E

Commented [@142]: C8.4-8 Bus stop H

Commented [@143]: C8.4-9 Bus stop G

Commented [@144]: C8.4-10 Bus stop O

Commented [@145]: C8.4-11 Bus stop U

8.5 By Cycle Route



I expected this to be simple to set, just follow the myriad of new cycle routes that have proliferated in recent years. Well there are lots of cycle routes and lots of authorities creating them and even more numbering systems. Add in repeated rebranding, routes with no names and I realise I have stumbled into a setter's minefield.

I eventually found a route that I was happy with and I decided to exploit the problems. So starting from King's Place:

1. We follow a TfL **C** route (OK there are lots of routes designated C by TfL but I had to start here and it was all there was) east down Goods Way to Midland Road.
2. Joining TfL **C6** we head south.
3. After a short while TfL Route C6 and TfL Route **CS6** start sharing the same route. It is possible that TfL Route CS6 is an obsolete designation but it is still up on TfL's site.
4. Once over Blackfriars Bridge we join National Cycle Network **Route 4**.
5. Heading west on the National Cycle Network Route 4 it starts to share its route with EuroVelo **Route 2**.
6. We join National Cycle Network **Route 461** around Eton and head north.
7. We quickly join National Cycle Network **Route 61** and head east.

Commented [@146]: C8.5-1 Cycle C

Commented [@147]: C8.5-2 Cycle C6

Commented [@148]: C8.5-3 Cycle CS6

Commented [@149]: C8.5-4 Cycle Route 4

Commented [@150]: C8.5-5 Cycle EuroVelo 2

Commented [@151]: C8.5-6 Cycle Route 461

Commented [@152]: C8.5-7 Cycle Route 61

8. National Cycle Network **Route 6** is joined as it shares the route around the north west edge of London.
9. Eventually on the Ebury Way section of National Cycle Network Route 6, at **Holywell**, we turn-off onto a set of unnamed, but designated, cycle tracks that take you to Whippendell Wood (see image to right). The Google Satellite view, penultimate image, shows the turn-off. Holywell is the last named route section so I have chosen that as the cipher key to decode the journey. You will see the cipher text DIDKEXS is placed after the first satellite image to hint at this usage.
10. The final Google Satellite view shows where the cycle tracks turn north west towards **Whippendell**.



Commented [@153]: C8.5-8 Cycle Route 6

Commented [@154]: C8.5-9 Cycle Holywell

Commented [@155]: C8.5-10 Cycle Whippendell

8.6 By National Rail

We start at Kings Cross the nearest National Rail station on the 23rd of December¹⁶. We are given a set of arrival times for the train (as indicated by the partial cover for the ABBA album **Arrival**) and a hint for the departure station with an abbreviated version of the station code, e.g. K 🚉 🚉 for KGX, King’s Cross. I have not explored too thoroughly if there are alternative journeys to the one I have found. If there are and they do not decode the cipher text then bad luck, zero points. If they do decode the cipher text then you may get points, it depends on what I think of your solution! All journeys are direct (i.e. no changes). The full Departure Board information is below:



Commented [@156]: C8.6-1 Train date of travel 23rd

Commented [@157]: C8.6-2 Train times are arrivals, from ABBA

From	Abbrev.	Dep	Arr	To	Abbrev.
London Kings Cross	KGX	05:48	11:46	Dundee	DEE
Dundee	DEE	11:58	13:21	Glasgow Queen Street	GLQ
Glasgow Queen Street	GLQ	14:13	14:20	Partick	PTK
Partick	PTK	14:36	14:43	Glasgow Central	GLC
Glasgow Central	GLC	15:13	17:43	Carlisle	CAR
Carlisle	CAR	17:53	21:20	London Euston	EUS
London Euston	EUS	21:30	22:18	Watford Junction	WFJ

Commented [@158]: C8.6-3 Train Dundee identified

Commented [@159]: C8.6-4 Glasgow Queen Street identified

Commented [@160]: C8.6-5 Train Partick identified

Commented [@161]: C8.6-6 Train Glasgow Central identified

Commented [@162]: C8.6-7 Train Carlisle identified

Commented [@163]: C8.6-8 Train London Euston identified

Commented [@164]: C8.6-9 Train Watford Junction identified

So, as with all journeys the final destination, **WATFORDJUNCTION**, is used to decode the cipher text, **ZAONRTUJSGJHZDR**, around the image. This decode is described in *Chapter 8 The Journeys on page 16*. The decode is DAVIDCRAYTHORPE, another Modesty Blaise character and is used in the lower case character crossword on Page 10 of the hunt, see *Chapter 11 Lower Case Characters Crossword* on page 29 for details.

¹⁶ You are told it is the 23rd and the only 23rd in the timeframe of the hunt is December 23rd. I picked this date because it gives you a few days after the start of the hunt before journey planner software starts to say “no journeys in the past”. I wanted to use a date in January but there are a lot of rail replacement services that messed up my timings. My times were compiled on 4th December 2025 and checked on the 15th after the half yearly timetable update. My condolences if the train times changed after this date. They were certainly not consistent in the previous few months when I had to reconfigure this puzzle several times. My thinking was that this near to Christmas they would not change.

Note also that the Morse code around the perimeter of the image is also cipher text, **WSXNPMWBZVPPFECHBXSXK**. To decode this use the Abbreviations of the destinations, namely **DEEGLQPTKGLCCARWFJEUSWFJ** as a key with the Vigenère cipher. This yields **TOTHEWHIPPENDELLWOODS**.

8.7 By Road

Starting at King’s Place we take the following roads:

- **A5200** north
- **A400** north
- **A1** North West
- **M25** West
- **A405** South
- **A405** South
- **A41** West
- **A411** South



The colours are the road colours on an OS 1:50,000 map.

As we head south down the A411 we see a sign much like the one in the centre of the first image above. This takes us to **Whippendell Wood**, the full route is on the right. The cipher text is **PHXBOKFHPEN** and if we take the key as the missing part of the sign, **Watford A411**, we get **THEWATCHMEN**. OK the 411 does not immediately translate to letters but it is not a big jump to try **WATFORDADAA** and if you just use **WatfordA** you get most of the clear text and the rest can be discerned.

9 Questions

A full list of the questions and their answers is in *Appendix B Answers to the Questions on page 42*.

The question numbers on pages 2-12 are taken from the daily strip numbers used in Modesty Blaise. On each page the numbers chosen coincide with one Modesty Blaise strip story. The first question on each page is an offset from the first day of the story and that offset can be used to derive a letter from the story name.

This link lists all the stories https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modesty_Blaise

E.g. on page 3 the story, “With Love from Rufus”, starts on day 2739. Since 2742 is the first question on page 3 we select the 4th letter from the story, H.

Note also that each page number at the bottom of the page has a very small suffix associated with it. Again if we use this as an offset into the story name we get a letter.

We get **WHIPPENDELL** from the page question start numbers and **LITTLEKRELL** from the page suffixes. Yet another pointer to the treasure site. Little Krell is a character

Commented [@165]: C8.6-10 Train “To the Whippendell Woods” decoded

Commented [@166]: C8.7-1 Road A5200 identified

Commented [@167]: C8.7-2 Road A400 identified

Commented [@168]: C8.7-3 Road A1 identified

Commented [@169]: C8.7-4 Road M25 identified

Commented [@170]: C8.7-5 Road A405 (green) identified

Commented [@171]: C8.7-6 Road A405 (red) identified

Commented [@172]: C8.7-7 Road A41 identified

Commented [@173]: C8.7-8 Road A411 identified

Commented [@174]: C9-1 Question #s Whippendell decoded

Commented [@175]: C9-2 Question #s Little Krell decoded

from the Modesty Blaise novel The Xanadu Talisman and is used in the lower case character crossword on Page 10 of the hunt, see *Chapter 11 Lower Case Characters Crossword* on page 29 for details.

Page	Story	Start Day	First Q	W	Page Suffix	L
2	Willie the Djinn	2163	2163	W	4	L
3	With Love from Rufus	2739	2742	H	2	I
4	The Iron God	3198	3201	I	1	T
5	Death Trap	4242	4250	P	4	T
6	Dossier on Pluto	4933	4942	P	11	L
7	Death in Slow Motion	5620	5621	E	2	E
8	Lady in the Dark	7340	7345	N	13	K
9	Ivory Dancer	7855	7860	D	4	R
10	Our Friend Maude	7960	7966	E	7	E
11	Children of Lucifer	9645	9648	L	4	L
12	The Killing Game	9965	9970	L	6	L

9.1 The First Letter of the Answers

Most questions have a clear answer and a first letter that is obvious.¹⁷ To help this process the questions where a first letter is not available (e.g. a numeric answer) have their number italicized. The first letter of the answers strung together yield **44** characters:

BSYKCRJDBBIHWBLPGRJBRNSBCSPBSVSDJACCOHHEBWS

These characters will lead to a hidden file, starting with the hints in the Ironbridge picture on page 11. There are 44 question numbers that are not italicized, i.e. questions where a single letter is easily derived from the answer. The cipher text in the middle of the picture is 44 characters. So starting with the first arrow we extract the cipher text in the middle of the picture:



HSMVTPKAWLEXGXUEGFIBIIYVWCDFVJXCXCVFTJUEADXZ

If this is decoded with a Blaise de Vigenère key of **IRONBRIDGE** (see 8.1 *By Canal* on page 17 for the derivation of IRONBRIDGE) we get:

ZBYISYCXQHWGSKTNYCCXARKIVLVOZRBLJPUOLGOASMJM

Commented [176]: C9.1-1 44 Questions are significant

Commented [177]: C9.1-2 44 Ironbridge decode of 44 chars

¹⁷ As per many previous treasure hunts, a first letter is the first letter of the surname of the answer if it is a person, otherwise use the first letter of the answer. So where the answer is David Kee the first letter is K, if the answer is Oxford Circus then the first letter is O.

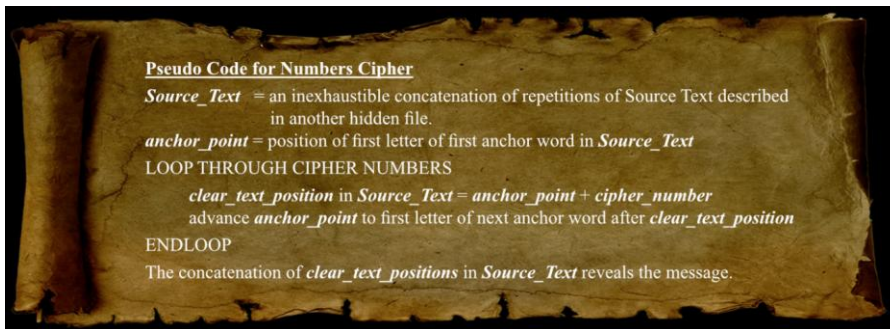
The next pointer is to a ? This is where we introduce the 44 first letters of the answers. We use the above letters as a Blaise de Vigenère key to decode the first letter of the answers, we get:

CRACKTHENUMBERSCIPHERWITHHUNTERSALGORITHM.PNG

This can be reasonably interpreted as:

Crack the numbers cipher with huntersalgorithm.png

i.e. the decoded message reveals the name of a hidden file, **huntersalgorithm.png**. To display this file use the approach described in *Chapter 11 Lower Case Characters Crossword* on page 29. The file is shown below:



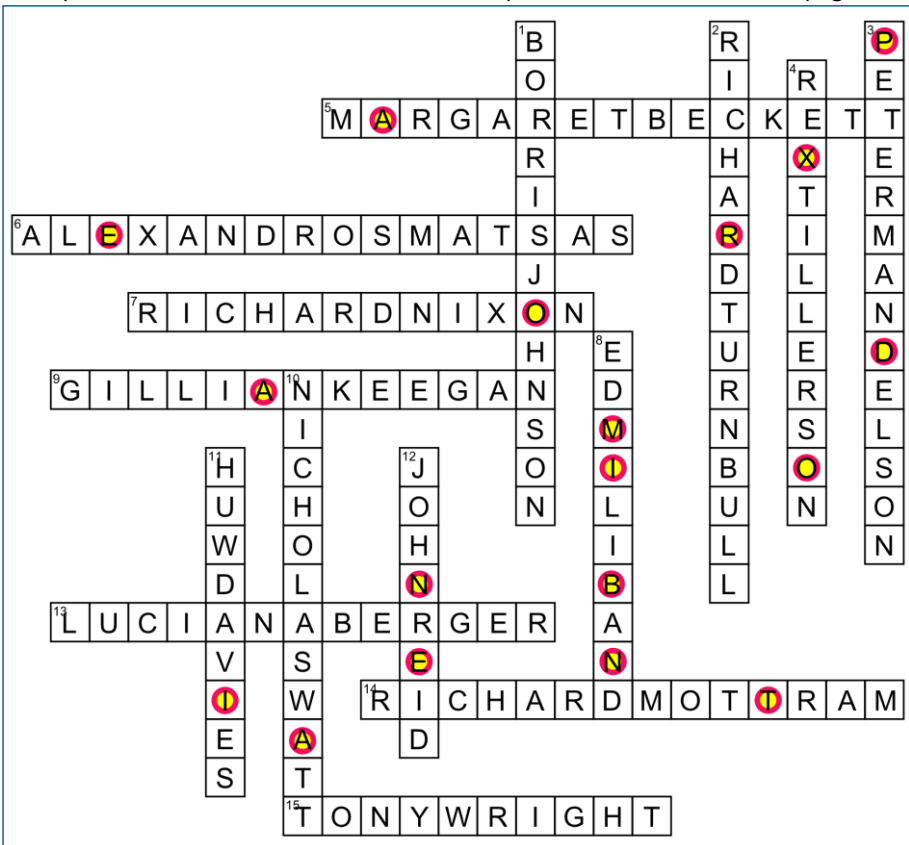
This file will help us crack the numbers cipher and get to the treasure as indicated by the third arrow in the picture.

Commented [178]: C9.1-3 44 Answers decode

Commented [179]: C9.1-4 huntersalgorithm.png found

10 Adult Crossword ~

On hunt page 5 there is an Adult Crossword which is qualified with **Allegedly** since the evidence for many of the assertions are not always strong. The clues are on hunt page 12 where the **ACROSS** and **DOWN** titles to the clues use the same font as **ADULT CROSSWORD ALLEGEDLY**. The font is **Comfortably ~**. The solution is below and the explanation for the clues can be found in *Chapter 10 Adult Crossword ~* on page 57.



Reading the highlighted squares from left to right and down we get **PAXERODAMIONBENITA**, i.e. Paxero, Damion, & Benita. These are three characters from the Modesty Blaise novel *Last Day in Limbo*. These characters are used to solve the lower case characters crossword on hunt page 10. See *Chapter 11 Lower Case Characters Crossword* on page 29 for details.

Commented [180]: C10-1 44
Comfortably ~ font identified

Commented [181]: C10-2 Pax, Dam, &
Ben id'd as MB

- `getmap23kl24ry.png`

Regular users of PablosATH.com will know it has an archive and if you look up any year you see the following URL displayed:

- <https://www.pablosath.com/archive/yyyy/puzzleyyyy>

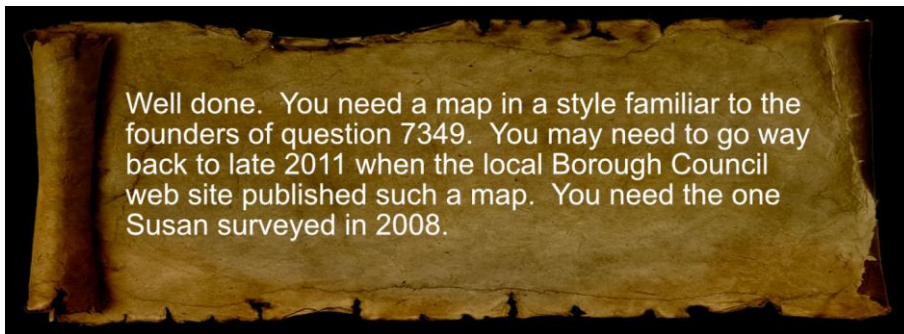
where yyyy is the year you are interested in. It is a small step to try the following URL in your browser.

- <https://www.pablosath.com/archive/2025/docs/help/getmap23kl24ry.png>¹⁸

This will start a dialogue where you will be asked to enter:

- your name
- team name (I want to see how teams are getting on)
- your email address (if there is a problem with the file I only want to inform those who have got this far)

Eventually the following will be revealed:



The answer to question 7349 is the British Orienteering Federation. So you are looking for an old orienteering map that used to be on the local Borough Council web site. We know that Whippendell Wood is our treasure site location so Watford is the local council. We need to use the **way back** (as hinted in the message) machine of the Internet Archive (<https://archive.org/>) and look at Watford's web page in late 2011.

The existing URL of Watford Council is **Watford.gov.uk** and that is what you enter into the search box of the Internet Archive¹⁹. Depending on the time of day this can be a

¹⁸ Note that if you mistakenly use a shortened (or uppercase) URL, such as <https://www.pablosath.com/archive/2025/>, you may get a message "You Just Keep looking! But stick to lowercase.". This is a reminder that the URL must be in lowercase and a hint that you are not too far away. Also the unnecessary use of **You** is yet another hint that the word is going to be useful.

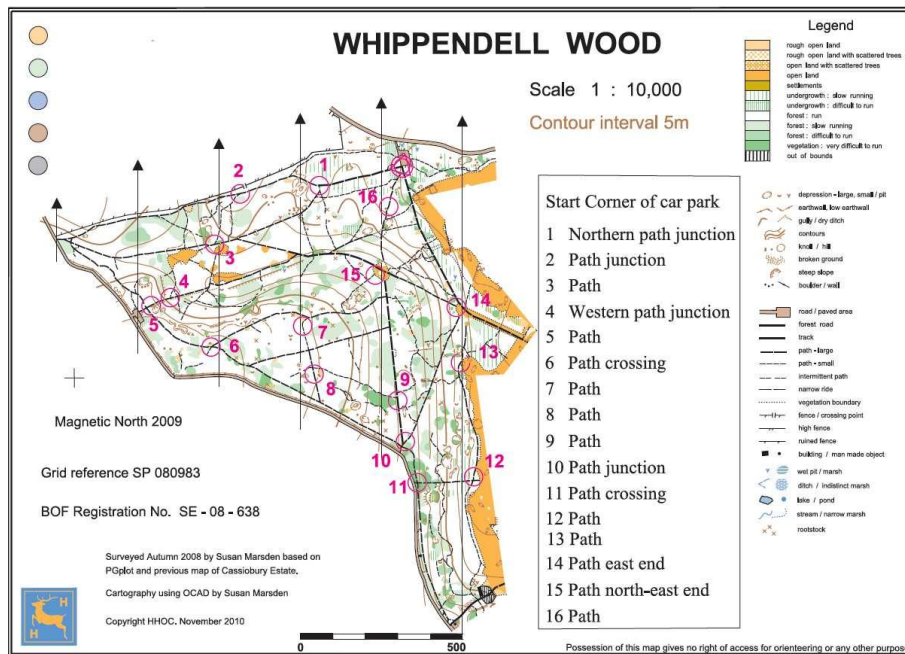
¹⁹ Actually <http://watford.gov.uk>

Commented [184]: C11-2
getmap23kl24ry.png found

quick or slow process, note that often the Internet Archive appears to return nothing when it is just slow, be patient. You will see a timeline of snapshots that the Archive has recorded, click on 2011 and have a look to see what has been recorded in late 2011. You will see a couple of entries for October and November and one for December. Select the one for December (although the others probably work). Eventually the web page for December 2011 will be displayed. Scroll down to *Leisure and culture/Parks and openspaces*. The Parks and open spaces page has an entry for *Whippendell Wood* and at the bottom of the Whippendell Wood page is a link to an **Orienteering course map** which can be downloaded. The map is below and as you can see it was surveyed by Susan Marsden in Autumn 2008.

Commented [185]: C11-3 Susan's map downloaded from lccw

11.1 OO Map



12 Page 11 Blaise de Vigenère

This is a composite image. The background is an OS map extract of **Whippendell Wood**, with most of the identifying detail scrubbed. This is overlaid with an image of Blaise de Vigenère (inventor of the eponymous cipher) and that is overlaid with a rail

fence showing cipher text. The whole image is then flipped horizontally. The full images and cipher text are:



UQZVXRTEWNMHADHKXLWVIWQIEHHS
 GZJGRJI IYESGAHSWNMGAHZFZBTIP
 CTLDCEPI PRGTXHPVPYSPGDGSLTQM
 LXXBMYRBRVCPBYXAJLREMPHJRAGL

The hidden message was first encoded using a Vigenère cipher and a key of Whippendell (from the map and the numerous other mentions). It was then encoded again with a rail fence cipher of 4 rails (it’s a 4 rail fence). To decipher we first decode the 4 rail cipher and get:

UVCCTIQWLPDQZICBEEVHPYIHXSPX
 RGRZGATJTGXJHREJPLVIWI PRYYNE
 SPSPMGGM DAHHGTS SAWLPTNDMQHMG
 HALJXHKZXRBFXZMAYBLTRGBIW PRLV

If we feed this into a Vigenère cipher with a key of **Whippendell** we get

You need the Susan Marsden map dated November twenty ten. The council had it displayed on their web site way back in October twenty eleven.

Commented [186]: C12-1 Susan’s map downloaded from railfence

You do not actually need the key to break the Vigenère cipher. I have given you so much text it falls easily to a brute force attack to yield the key Whippendell²⁰. This is why I used the rail fence cipher first, I wanted to disrupt the brute force attack.

This is the second pointer to the map and has slightly different information. Susan’s surname is given and the date of the map and the month to look for in 2011.

To retrieve information from defunct websites or old versions of current sites the tool of choice is the WayBack Machine²¹. This is an archive of what has been on the web and is “... a non-profit library of millions of free texts, movies, software, music, websites, and more”. It currently has almost a trillion web pages and, luckily for me, a map from 2011 which seems to be nowhere else on the web.

²⁰ Use the dcode.fr site. It easily identifies the cipher and then the key.

²¹ See *Chapter 11 Lower Case Characters Crossword* on page 24 for a description of how to find the map using the WayBack Machine

Note also that Blaise de Vigenère has the question number 4944 concealed in his hair. This is a hint to the answer to that question, see the explanation in *Appendix B* on page 42.

Commented [187]: C12-2 4944 concealed in BdV hair noticed

12.1 Page 11 Cipher Text

To the left of the Blaise de Vigenère image are 4 lines of cipher text. The text has been created using a rail fence cipher of 4 rails (it's next to a 4 rail fence!), as used above. The decode is *onepointfivepacesoutheastoftree*, which can be reasonably interpreted as **one point five paces south east of tree**. This is perhaps not a very useful clue when you are searching a wood. Its usefulness, or not, is described in *14.3 The Treasure Location* on page 35.

```
ONPOSENI
TEASUATR
EEOFVCST
EOTPIEHF
```

Commented [188]: C12-3 1.5 paces SE of tree decoded

Hang your head in shame if you did not decode this. It falls immediately to the automatic decryption features of <https://www.dcode.fr/cipher-identifier/> <https://www.dcode.fr/rail-fence-cipher>. No cipher skills required.

13 Page 12 Twirled Image

Twirled images, where the image is deformed in a twirling motion, were once popular on the dark web. The user felt that their real image was out there but no one could see it. Then along came untwirling software and convictions. Below is a screen copy of the image from the ATH pdf, the original and the result of using untwirling software on the screen copy²².



I added the image of the Twirl bar (scrubbed of identifying data) to give you a little help on the technology. The cipher text is **HQXGHREBEJO**.



Commented [189]: C13-1 Twirl bar identified

The untwirled image is of **Vincent Vega** enjoying Modesty Blaise (John Travolta In Pulp Fiction, 1994)²³. After all the references to Modesty Blaise this should have not been too difficult to find. Using Vincent Vega as a Vigenère key the cipher text decodes to **MIKEDELGADO**, a character in the first Modesty Blaise novel that I read and got me hooked, Sabre-Tooth.

Commented [190]: C13-2 Untwirled image identified

Commented [191]: C13-3 Mike Delgado decoded

²² There are a number of untwirling sites on the web, and I am sure they give good results. Unfortunately, I could not test any of them for fear of data leakage. I am sure you will have no problem, use an angle of 222.5 and a pixel radius of 323.

²³ <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0110912/trivia/?item=tr1781550>

14 The Numbers Cipher and Treasure Location

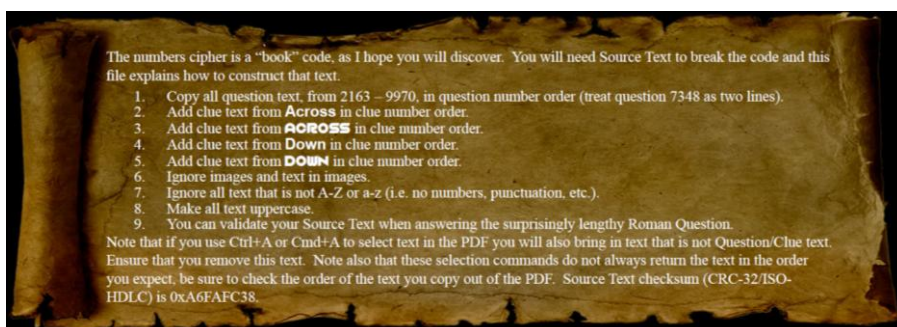
The numbers at the bottom of pages 2-11 are the final part of the hunt. The part that gives up the treasure location. I have always felt that the final bit before picking up the treasure should take a bit of effort, hence the numbers code. Conceptually trivial but a bit of effort to execute.

To decode the Numbers Cipher you need to have found/solved the following hidden files/enciphered messages:

- sourceemldg.pdf described in Chapter 6 Source Text
- getmap23kl24ry.png described in Chapter 11 OO map
- enciphered message described in Chapter 12 OO map
- trythis.htm described in Chapter 8.2 Anchor words
- huntersalgorithm.png described in Chapter 9.1 Cipher method

14.1 Source Text

The numbers cipher is a book code of sorts. A Book code needs source text. You need to have found the file that reveals how to find the Source Text, it is shown below:



The above process is straightforward cut and paste, if somewhat error prone. The cleanup of the text is best done using some kind of software, although it can be done by hand easily enough.

You can validate that you have the correct source text using the Roman question, 7345 (it is the only question using Roman Numerals).

7345. What is next in the sequence?	M	=	T
	MM	=	G
	MMM	=	D
	IV	=	N
	V	=	O
	VI	=	?

Commented [192]: C14.1-1 Identified Roman Q 7345

The question number is the number of characters in the source text, i.e. 7345 (as hinted by *lengthy Roman question*). Also you are given the letter at 1,000 character intervals and finally you can answer question 7864 since you now know the 6,000th letter!

- The 1,000th letter is T

- The 2,000th letter is G
- The 3,000th letter is D
- The 4,000th letter is N
- The 5,000th letter is O

The 6,000th letter is C

Given that creating the source text is an error prone process I was advised to add the checksum. So, if you are having trouble with the decode you can at least be sure that the source text is correct.

14.2 Anchor Words

The anchor words are a key part of the Numbers cipher and are given to you as speech, see *Chapter 8.2 Through Adjacent Constituencies* on page 19. This is deliberate. The anchor words are:

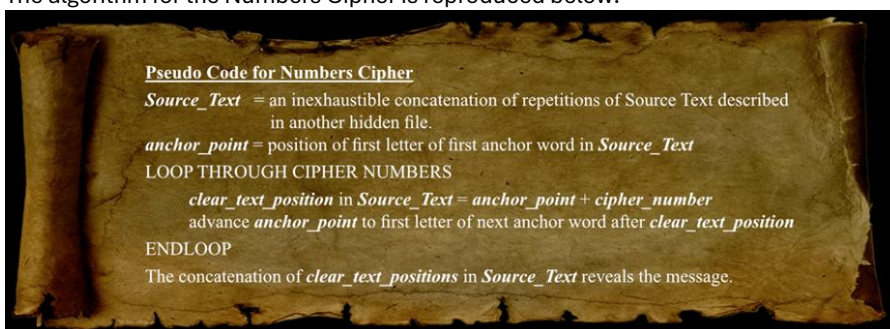
- You
- Yew
- Ewe

All sound the same (according to the Premium Online Oxford Dictionary) and I was hoping to spread a little confusion.

Note also that, combined with the image of an anchor in the Poster (see 3.3 *Bird Box from ATH2015* on page 9) this is a hint that the tree supporting the bird box is a yew tree.

14.3 The Treasure Location

The algorithm for the Numbers Cipher is reproduced below:



In the previous sections of this chapter we have described how to construct the Source Text and what the anchor words are. Applying the pseudo code above we can now decode the Numbers Cipher. Initially I used Python to do this and an Excel sheet as an independent check, as well as a small amount of hand checking. To be certain I subsequently had an independent check done, so hopefully we have got it right.

Commented [@193]: C14.2-1 Anchor words identified

Commented [@194]: C14.2-2 Anchor and Yew tree hint noted

The decode²⁴ of the numbers at the bottom of pages 2-11 is:

USESOLUTIONTOQUADRATICQUESTIONASBEARINGFROMOOCONTROLSTHREEANDSEVEN
 EVENTREASUREISATTHEINTERSECTIONUSECONTROLSONTHEGROUNDFORHIGHEST
 ACCURACY

with reasonable interpretation the message is:

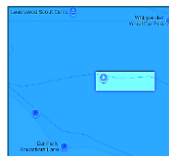
**Use solution to quadratic question as bearing from OO controls three and seven.
 Treasure is at the intersection. Use controls on the ground for highest accuracy.**

Question 4946 on hunt page 6 asks for the solution to a quadratic equation, see Appendix B Answers to the Questions on page 42 for the two solutions, 96 and 12. The map shows the intersection of the bearings²⁵ and where the treasure can be found.

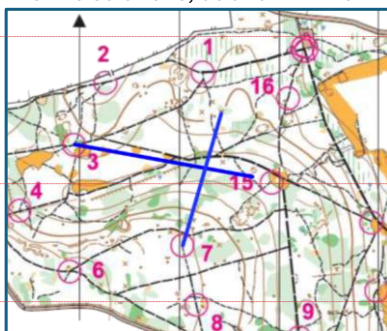
Using mapping software, or sites on the web²⁶, you can calculate the intersection point and go straight to the treasure location at 51.6694,-0.4424.

The treasure casket is buried very close to a yew tree in which the disguised²⁷ bird box is hidden. A TV remote pointed vaguely in the direction of the yew tree will activate the saxophone in the treasure box and reveal its location²⁸. A gloved hand is sufficient to clear away the thin layer of leaves to reveal two large rings which can be used to gently extract the treasure casket from the ground.

The TV remote also activates an electronic circuit to send me an SMS message through the cellular 2G network. The idea is to let me know that the treasure has been found. Although this circuitry is tested and working it unfortunately does not work at the treasure site. I have managed to pick the one place in the wood without 2G coverage!



There is a Logica 1 outline on the face of the bird box. When the remote control is used a group of yellow LEDs are activated and the outline should be visible.



Commented [@195]: C14.3-1 decoded numbers cipher

Commented [@196]: C14.3-2 Q4946 identified as quadratic

Commented [@197]: C14.3-3 bearings 96 & 12 identified

Commented [@198]: C14.3-4 Treasure location determined

Commented [@199]: C14.3-5 Yew tree noted at treasure site

Commented [@200]: C14.3-6 Logica L noted noted at treasure site

²⁴ For those of you who had trouble with this cipher I have included my workings in Appendix D Number Cipher Working Detail on page 61.

²⁵ Note that when drawing the bearings on Susan's map you need to take account of magnetic north in 2009, west 4.25°. The bearings relative to the grid lines on the map are therefore 100.25° and 16.25°.

²⁶ E.g. <https://www.nicethis.com/tools/Show-Intersecting-Bearings-Position-On-Map.aspx>

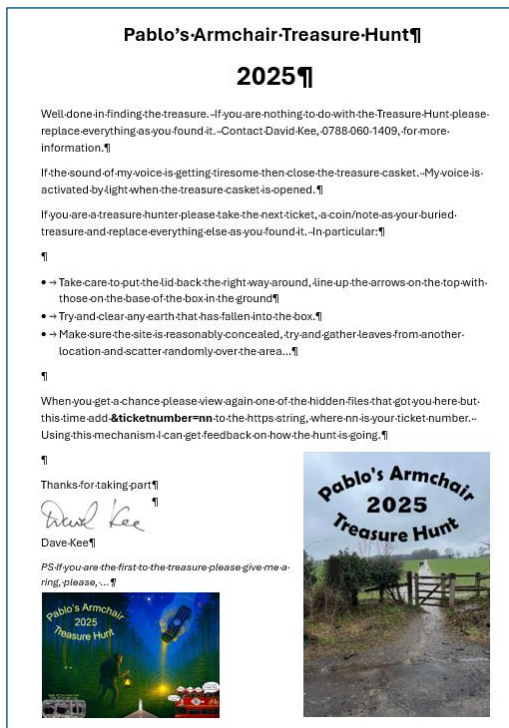
²⁷ Painted matt brown to try and blend with the tree trunk.

²⁸ In the event of an electronics failure (there are 21 batteries involved) and the saxophone does not sound, searchers are expected to remember the unused cipher text decode, **one point five paces south east of tree** (see 12.1 Page 11 Cipher Text on page 29). The tree is obviously the nearby yew and the treasure location should be clear.

When opened the treasure casket contains:

- Treasure, foreign and old coins and a 1 yuan note.
- Instructions on what to do next, shown below.
- A book of numbered tickets; ticket 1 (face and back) shown below.
- Hopefully, my voice congratulating you on solving ATH2025.²⁹

Commented [201]: C14.3-7 Ticket number retrieved at treasure site



²⁹ This is an upgrade to 2015 and not entirely reliable, it works by detecting light.

Appendix A Unsliced Crossword

A.1 Unsliced Crossword Solution

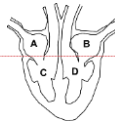
M U S S O R G S K Y															Page 11
R A C H M A N I N O V															Page 5
S M U O	S A L I E R I										M O Z A R T				Page 7
B E N J A M I N B R I T T E N															Page 8
T H O M A S T A L L I S															Page 3
S C H U M A N N															Page 6
P E R G O L E S I															Page 9
P I E R R E B O U L E Z															Page 2
D S B T H O M A S T A L L I S															Page 4
M A U R I C E R A V E L															Page 10
B E L A B A R T O K															
B U X T E H U D E															

Commented [202]: A1-1 Crossword reassembled correctly

Note that the author of the clues was keen to point out that **Chambers** Dictionary was his primary source for checking out the clues. Therefore a hint was included on the bottom right of each slice.



Chambers of a gun



Chambers of the heart

Commented [@203]: A1-2 Chambers of a gun identified

Commented [@204]: A1-2 Chambers of a heart identified

221B

The term "**chambers**" is used in Sherlock Holmes to describe 221B Baker Street. E.g. in THE ADVENTURE OF THE EMPTY HOUSE we have the text "Our old **chambers** had been left unchanged through the supervision of Mycroft Holmes and the immediate care of Mrs. Hudson."

Commented [@205]: A1-3 Chambers of a Sherlock Holmes identified



The image is of the combined arms of the four Inns of Court that contain barristers' **chambers**. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inns_of_Court

Commented [@206]: A1-4 Barristers' chambers identified



This publicity image is from **Chambers**, a Netflix streaming series. A 2019 quote from the web, "Netflix's new supernatural thriller 'Chambers,' featuring Uma Thurman and Tony Goldwyn, is full of big, crazy ideas without the attention span to do any of them justice." This seems to indicate that you may not have missed much if you did not get this.

Commented [@207]: A1-6 Chambers Netflix TV streaming series identified

<https://www.epicdope.com/is-chambers-any-good-worth-your-time-a-complete-review/#>



Cover of **Chambers** Crossword Dictionary with text scrubbed out. Original on the right.



Commented [@208]: A1-5 Chambers Dictionary identified

A.2 Answers to Unsliced Crossword Clues

Note that the answers to all clues are **COMPOSERS** and that is the theme of this crossword.

Across	Clue	Answer
2	Weirdly able to counter time? Certainly! (4, 6)	BELA BARTOK [ABLE* + BAR ('counter') + T(ime) + OK ("Certainly")]
3	Without sacred chant once yielding the due convert (9)	BUXTEHUDE [(BUXOM ("yielding" archaic) - OM ("sacred chant")) + THEDUE*]
5	In so many words, it's a lie. Right? (7)	SALIERI [Hidden in "(it')S A LIE R(right?")]
7	Blimey! Not half concise (7)	CORELLI [COR + ELLI(ptic)]
8	A notorious letter ending in an allegation of foul play (11)	RACHMANINOV [RACHMAN ("A notorious letter" sc. of slum properties) + INOV (homophone of IN/OFF - "foul play" sc. in snooker)]
10	Play improvised music on top of a mountain in this country, I hear (9, 7)	BENJAMIN BRITTEN ["On" BEN ("top of a mountain JAM ("Play improvised music") + IN + BRITTEN/Britain ("this country, I hear")]
13	Curie - a marvel, extraordinary! (7, 5)	MAURICE RAVEL [CURIEAMARVEL*]

Commented [@209]: A2-Across-2 BELA BARTOK

Commented [@210]: A2-Across-3 BUXTEHUDE

Commented [@211]: A2-Across-5 SALIERI

Commented [@212]: A2-Across-7 CORELLI

Commented [@213]: A2-Across-8 RACHMANINOV/RACHMANINOF(F)

Commented [@214]: A2-Across-10 BENJAMIN BRITTEN

Commented [@215]: A2-Across-13 MAURICE RAVEL

14	Namely, one of us, leading light in Navy (7)	SCHUMANN [SC + HUMAN + N(avy)]
16	Review of prize involving rare decorated furniture artist scratched (6, 6)	PIERRE BOULEZ [PRIZE* around (RARE + BOULE (“decorated furniture”) - RA (“artist”))]
19	Maybe unruly Irish expressing regret (3, 5)	AMY BEACH [MAYBE* + ACH (“expression of regret” in Ireland - <i>Chambers</i>)]
20	Nothing in the new maths is remarkable when reversed (6, 6)	THOMAS TALLIS [(O (“nothing”) in MATHS*) + (IS TALL (“remarkable”) in reverse order)]
21	Confusion or the end of everything on satellite TV (10)	MUSSORGSKY [MUSS (“CONFUSION”) + OR + G (“the end of everything”) + SKY (“satellite TV”)]
22	Paul’s unorthodox on something very difficult. The last shall be first! (7)	GALUPPI [PAUL* + PIG (“something very difficult”) with final G put first]
25	Billy’s former possessions (11)	BUTTERWORTH [BUTTER (“Billy” goat) + WORTH (“former possessions” - possessions an obsolete meaning of “worth”)]
26	Darwin’s curse - magic! (6)	MOZART [MOZ (“curse” - Australian slang) + ART (“magic”)]
27	Biblical king’s agent returning - bone idle, by the sound of it (9)	PERGOLESI [(OG + REP) rev. + LESI (homophone of “lazy”)]
30	Allow the return of backsliding Northern celebrity (8)	TELEMANN [LET (“Allow”) backwards + (N(orthern) + NAME (“celebrity”)) backwards]
35	The first symbols of that hymn of morning are sublime. Sit back and drink everything in (6, 6)	THOMAS TALLIS [(THOMAS (first letters of “that hymn of morning are sublime”)) + SIT rev. around ALL (“everything”)]
39	Disastrous end of old oven-timer (10)	MONTEVERDI [((o)D + OVEN-TIMER)*]

Commented [@216]: A2-Across-14 SCHUMANN

Commented [@217]: A2-Across-16 PIERRE BOULEZ

Commented [@218]: A2-Across-19 AMY BEACH

Commented [@219]: A2-Across-20 THOMAS TALLIS

Commented [@220]: A2-Across-21 MUSSORGSKY

Commented [@221]: A2-Across-22 GALUPPI

Commented [@222]: A2-Across-25 BUTTERWORTH

Commented [@223]: A2-Across-26 MOZART

Commented [@224]: A2-Across-27 PERGOLESI

Commented [@225]: A2-Across-30 TELEMANN

Commented [@226]: A2-Across-35 THOMAS TALLIS

Commented [@227]: A2-Across-39 MONTEVERDI

Down	Clue	Answer
1	Faraday managed a register containing more than one unknown (5, 5)	FRANZ LISZT [F(araday) * RAN (“managed”) + LIST (“a register”) with two Zs (“more than one unknown”) inserted]
4	Girl has taken us back in after dreadful ordeal outside rocky den (7, 2, 6)	ORLANDE DE LASSUS [(LASS around US) reversed] after (ORDEAL* around DEN*)]
6	What even a sculptor’s best friend won’t tell him? (7)	BORODIN [B.O., Rodin]
8	He’s ordained a sort of salute (9)	REVUELTAS [(REV(erend) (“He’s ordained”)) + SALUTE*]
9	Unusual large adder eating head of worm (6, 5)	EDWARD ELGAR [LARGEADDER* around (“eating”) W(orm)]

Commented [@228]: A2-Down-1 FRANZ LISZT

Commented [@229]: A2-Down-4 ORLANDE DE LASSUS

Commented [@230]: A2-Down-6 BORODIN

Commented [@231]: A2-Down-8 REVUELTAS

Commented [@232]: A2-Down-9 EDWARD ELGAR

11	Safe confined space invaded by fighting (5, 7)	PETER WARLOCK [PETER (“Safe”) + LOCK (“confined space”) around (“invaded by”) WAR (“fighting”)]
12	Her ribbon I’ve confused with a missing chain (8, 3, 5)	HEINRICH VON BIBER [HERRIBBONIVE + CH(a)IN)*]
15	Crazy drunken chimp disposing of last of gin (11)	HUMPERDINCK . [(DRUNKENCHIMP - N)*]
17	Jerry’s quiet victory (8)	GERSHWIN [GER(man) (“Jerry”) + SH (“quiet”) + WIN (“victory”)]
18	Adult encountered in health resort beforehand (7)	SMETANA [(MET (“encountered”) in SAN (“health resort”)) preceding (“beforehand”) A(dult)]
23	Ply with Scotch while downing a mixed drink (10)	BIRTWISTLE [BIRLE (“Ply with” - Scots) around (“downing”) TWIST (“mixed drink”)]
24	Take eggs back? That’s about right (4, 4)	ARVO PÄRT [(TRAP + OVA) rev.] around Right)]
28	Calm old Roman legionary starting to change (7, 6)	MALCOLM ARNOLD [(CALMOLDROMAN + L(egionary))*]
29	Daily, the French put up with date moving back, so-called holiday homes included (7,7,8)	CHARLES VILLERS STANFORD . [(CHAR (“daily”) + LES (“the French”) + (STAND FOR becoming STANFORD)) round VILLERS (homophone of VILLAS)]
31	Incumbent temperature of fresh air (8)	VICTORIA [VIC(ar) (“Incumbent”) + T(emperature) + AIR*]
32	Time to take a taxi to school? To the contrary! (8)	SCHUBERT . [Not (T(ime) + UBER + SCH(ool)), but (SCH(ool) * UBER + T(ime))]
33	Namely, a gaol to house the leaders of Russia and Iran (8)	SCRIABIN . [SC (“Namely”) + A BIN (“a gaol”) around (R(ussian) + I(ran))]
34	Southampton incorporating a convenient means of returning north (5-5)	SAINT-SAENS [SAINTS (“Southampton”) around (SAE (“convenient means of returning”) + N(orth))]
36	The area where Saint Cecilia is buried? (4, 8)	THEA MUSGRAVE [THE + A(tea) + (MUS(ic) + GRAVE . Saint Cecilia is the patron saint of music]
37	What comes after the 4th of July is the beginning of end for the French first of all (5)	FINZI [Z (“What comes after the 4th of July”) I.e. Z comes after Y) + I (“is the beginning of”) preceded by (“first of all”) FIN (“end for the French”)]
38	First things first, Brian Eno’s really no mug (9)	BERNSTEIN [BERN (first letters of Brian Eno’s really no) + STEIN (“mug”)]
40	Scratched first performance, I hear, leading to a bit of stupid empty sympathy (6, 7)	CLAUDE DEBUSSY [(CLAUDE DEBU (homophone of CLAWED (“scratched”) DEBUT (“first performance”)) + S(tupid) + S(ympathy)Y]

Commented [@233]: A2-Down-11 **PETER WARLOCK**

Commented [@234]: A2-Down-12 **HEINRICH VON BIBER**

Commented [@235]: A2-Down-15 **HUMPERDINCK**

Commented [@236]: A2-Down-17 **GERSHWIN**

Commented [@237]: A2-Down-18 **SMETANA**

Commented [@238]: A2-Down-23 **BIRTWISTLE**

Commented [@239]: A2-Down-24 **ARVO PART**

Commented [@240]: A2-Down-28 **MALCOLM ARNOLD**

Commented [@241]: A2-Down-29 **CHARLES VILLIERS STANFORD**

Commented [@242]: A2-Down-31 **VICTORIA**

Commented [@243]: A2-Down-32 **SCHUBERT**

Commented [@244]: A2-Down-33 **SCRIABIN**

Commented [@245]: A2-Down-34 **SAINT SAENS**

Commented [@246]: A2-Down-36 **THEA MUSGRAVE**

Commented [@247R246]: A2-Down-37 **FINZI**

Commented [@248]: A2-Down-38 **BERNSTEIN**

Commented [@249]: A2-Down-40 **CLAUDE DEBUSSY**

Appendix B Answers to the Questions

See [answers2025draft1.xlsx](#) if you want to see the links to back up the explanations.

Qno	X	Question	Answer	Explanation
2163	?	Which question did you find the most irritating? Maximum points will be awarded if you identify the question most teams agreed was the most irritating. If there are a few equally valid answers, all will be given maximum points.	?	To be determined. The last sentence may seems superfluous; it was there to allow "few equally" to be in the question text (see the numbers cipher explanation for the reason why).
2164	B	Which central London railway station is named after a street that does not exist?	Bond Street	Bond Street is a station on the London Underground Central Line. However, there is no nearby Bond Street, only New Bond Street and Old Bond Street. There was a Westminster Council move to join the streets and rename them Bond Street but it was defeated by the residents.
2165	S	Who finally gave up looking for their true worth when they got close to a King's resting place.	The Searchers	The Searchers , the world's longest-running pop band, performed their final show at the Glastonbury Festival in 2025. Glastonbury Abbey , the rumoured burial place of King Arthur is only 8 miles from Worthy Farm where the festival is performed.
2166	Y	Who managed to bury a poor stage performance and emerge in the pink in 2025.	Simon Yates	Simon Yates, a bike rider from Bury , was leading the Giro d'Italia (one of the 3 world class annual 3 week bike stage races) in 2018 for 13 days. With 2 days to go he fell apart on the Colle delle Finestre (18km and 5,000' up) and finished 21st. He never came close again until 2025. In 2025 he was 3rd on the penultimate day (effectively the last day since the final day into Rome is largely ceremonial). He was not the favourite, the 2 ahead of him had pushed him down the leaderboard over the preceding days, frankly his performance to that point had not looked great and he trailed them up the Colle delle Finestre as they broke away. But with 10km to go to the top of the Finestre, and 40km to the finish, he decided to go for it and eventually won by nearly 4 minutes. He clocked the fastest ever time for ascending the Finestre, a staggering

Commented [@250]: B-Q2163

Commented [@251]: B-Q2164 Bond Street

Commented [@252]: B-Q2165 The Searchers

Commented [@253]: B-Q2166 Simon Yates

Qno	X	Question	Answer	Explanation
				achievement. The winner pulls on the maglia rosa (pink) jersey.
2167	K	You are on the train and have just missed your station on the London Underground, luckily the train will not stop again until it stops at the same station. What is the station?	Kennington	The oddity is known as the Kennington loop. Unlike most trains when they terminate at their final destination, trains finishing at Kennington do not vanish into some sort of depot. Instead, they continue to head south and the driver performs a U-turn near the Oval Cricket Ground before returning to Kennington to begin the northbound service. Transport for London have said that the train is actually supposed to empty when the southbound services terminates. But many passengers have missed their stop late at night and become bewildered when they arrive at Kennington twice in a row, much to the amusement of train drivers.
2742	-	Who was the first englishman to win the Tour de France?	-	The Tour de France has been won by several British riders. Bradley Wiggins, Chris Froome and Geraint Thomas. Bradley Wiggins was the son of the Australian cyclist Gary Wiggins, born to a British mother in Ghent, Belgium, and raised in London from the age of two. Chris Froome was born in Kenya to British parents and grew up there and in South Africa. Geraint Thomas was born in Cardiff, Wales. So, arguably, no Englishman (i.e. born in England) has ever won the Tour and this was the answer I was looking for. A hint that this was a tricky question was the use of englishman and not Englishman in the question. Neither Chambers not the Oxford dictionary consider englishman to be a valid word.
2743	?	2743. When the numbered questions are marked at the end of this hunt, the number of teams with the setter's answer will be zero or greater. Identify a question where no other question has more correct answers.	?	?

Commented [@254]: B-Q2167 Kennington

Commented [@255]: B-Q2742 No Englishman

Commented [@256]: B-Q2743

Qno	X	Question	Answer	Explanation
2744	C	In 2024 it looked to be more than possible that a long line of poor quality nouns would be superseded by an adverb and make this a great question. Unfortunately it was not to be, what was the adverb?	Cleverly	This is a reference to the Tory Party leadership campaign of 2024. Following a strong performance at the Conservative Party Conference, Cleverly emerged as a frontrunner by coming first in the third round of voting. Cleverly is an adverb but he was unexpectedly eliminated in a close fourth round of voting. Leaders prior to the 2024 campaign were: - Cameron - May - Johnson - Truss - Sunak These are all nouns/proper nouns.
2745	R	Believe it or not a colourful man and a local gardener made a significant contribution to the WWII war effort using an old fridge. Where? Justify your answer to get full credit.	Ripley	Penicillin was discovered in 1928 by Fleming but it was hard to mass produce and this did not happen until 1940. The government wanted to keep penicillin under wraps and for military use only, meaning the authorities were not issuing the chemicals or culture needed for large-scale production. Kenneth White (white is a mixture of all colours, i.e. colourful), a pharmacist from Ripley (Believe it or Not fame), a small village in Surrey, would not be defeated and would become the first person to produce it for the public in the UK. He managed to get hold of an old ice cream refrigerator and asked a baker from the area to build an incubator. With the help of a plant pathologist from nearby Wisley Gardens (local gardener), Mr White then had everything he needed to make the antibiotic. He received letters from various pharmaceutical companies as production began, including one from Bayer Products in July 1944, which congratulated him on becoming the first pharmacist in the UK to manufacture penicillin filtrate for members of the public. The people of Ripley remain proud of Mr White's huge achievement; there is a



Commented [257]: B-Q2744 Cleverly

Commented [258]: B-Q2745 Ripley

Qno	X	Question	Answer	Explanation
				plaque on the front of his former chemist building in the High Street.
2746	J	Matthew E Webb Gertrude Ederle, Yuri ... Valentina ... Edmund ... ? ...	Junko Tabei	The pairs of names are the first man and woman to do something: Matthew Webb Gertrude Ederle - swim the channel Yuri Gagarin Valentina Tereshkova - go into space Edmund ... Junko Tabei - summit Everest Not a particularly difficult question but I wanted to give Junko a shout-out as she is rarely mentioned in mountaineering circles and only became known to me in 2025. Apologies to Tenzing Norgay who summited Everest alongside Hillary, I just could not easily fit him into the question). The addition of a middle initial to Matthew Webb, who did not have a middle name was to allow the following concatenations, Matthew E Webb and Matthew E Webb in the question text(see the explanation for the numbers cipher).
2747	B	I have no mouth, but I can tell you if a storm is coming or if a clear path lies ahead. I am a silent prophet, consulted by those who must brave the elements. My face may show a bright sun, but my true purpose is to speak to the weather's hidden intentions. What am I?	Barometer	A rather simple cryptic clue that was unlikely to cause an ATher too many sleepless nights. However, the point of the question was to include "the weather " in the text so that the word ewe was available to the number cipher (described elsewhere)
3201	D	What random American definition of toilet action in 1934 became associated with TB in cows in 2025?	Diddly-squat	OK this is not a very satisfactory question but I was running out of ideas. The Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang suggests that Diddly-squat is a variation of doodly-squat from 1934, probably from American slang doodle ("excrement") + squat, used in the sense of defecating. Doodly-squat was originally the more common form, but diddly-squat overtook it in the early 1980s, and is now an order of magnitude more common in print. 31 July 2025, TV presenter Jeremy Clarkson has announced that his

Commented [@259]: B-Q2746 Junko Tabei

Commented [@260]: B-Q2747 Barometer

Commented [@261]: B-Q3201 Diddly Squat

Qno	X	Question	Answer	Explanation
				farm, Diddly Squat , has "gone down with TB".
3202	B	East Lothian has the only one of its kind. Tens of thousands were planned in 2024. Who failed to deliver?	BT	In January 2025 BT abandoned its scheme, announced in January 2024, to turn green street cabinets into electric vehicle (EV) charging points, having completed only one of the 60,000 conversions it initially said it was aiming for.
3203	0.59	An irregular hexagon with all sides of equal length is placed inside a square of side length 1 unit, as shown in the figure (not to scale). What is the length of one of the hexagon sides?	$2-\sqrt{2}$ 0.585786	This is a simple geometry problem from an Oxford University Admission Test. It looks like O-level standard to me (or the modern equivalent) so why it is in a University admission test is beyond me, although I did get it wrong the first time I did it! So I thought I would give other maths graduates a chance to fail.
3204	I	What metal's movement caused an event to occur for the first time ever in Hebden Bridge in August 2024, and a year later in Berwick-Upon-Tweed?	Iron	<p>Hebden Bridge and Berwick-Upon-Tweed are both on longitude 2 degrees west of the zero Greenwich meridian line. This line of longitude:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • follows Grid North for the Ordnance Survey • follows True North as a line of longitude • follows Magnetic North on the dates and locations in the question <p>This alignment of norths has never happened before and is unlikely to occur again for several hundred years. It is the result of the continual movement of Magnetic North which is caused by changes in the flow of iron in the Earth's liquid outer core.</p>
3205	-	Give two reasons why Bradley E Wiggins is not the answer to question 2742?	-	Question 2742 is "Who was the first Englishman to win the Tour de France?". Several British cyclists have triumphed in the Tour, Bradley Wiggins, Chris Froome and Geraint Thomas. However, none of them were born in England and for the purposes of the question are not considered to be Englishmen. Also there is no such cyclist as Bradley E Wiggins , this is a made up name to

Commented [@262]: B-Q3202 BT

Commented [@263]: B-Q3203 0.585786 / 2-√2

Commented [@264]: B-Q3204 Iron

Commented [@265]: B-Q3205 Not an Englishman, invalid name

Qno	X	Question	Answer	Explanation
				get the letter concatenation (see the numbers cipher explanation).
4250	H	Who, in 2025, was woken by his neighbour to discover an extraordinarily large Cypriot flag in his garden?	Johan Helberg	Johan Helberg in Norway was woken up by his neighbour to find a huge container ship had run aground and crashed into his front garden. The Cypriot-flagged cargo ship, the NCL Salten, had 16 people on board and was travelling south-west through the Trondheim Fjord to Orkanger when it went off course.
4251	W	In which London suburb is there a Tesco with a blue plaque in memory of a recent Prime Minister?	Walthamstow	A blue plaque was erected outside a Tesco in Walthamstow in late 2024 to commemorate the lettuce that famously outlasted Liz Truss's stint as prime minister.
4252	B	Which Karen sold Ishopsoiled pouch (much loved) for more than £350,000 in the mid 90s?	Karen Brady	"I shopsoiled pouch" is an anagram of Paul Peschisolido (note I is an uppercase I in the question font, Gill Sans). The placing document for Birmingham City Football Club tells the tale: "During the year ended 31 August 1996, Paul Peschisolido, husband of Karren Brady (managing director), was bought and sold by BCFC. On 28 March 1996, he was purchased for pounds 400,000 and sold on 22 July 1996 for pounds 550,000."
4253	L	What is next in the sequence: LS=YW, MY=BE, WH=RD, WR=MN, SE=GN?	LY=GY	Each item is the first and last letter of a line on the London Overground and its corresponding colour. E.g. LS is the Lioness line and its colour is Yellow . There are six lines but only 5 items, so the next in sequence is the missing line, which is the Liberty line, which is Grey, i.e. LY=GY.
4254	P	Billionaires Donald Trump, Kanye West, Ross Perot and Mike Bloomberg were all comprehensively unsuccessful/losers during a?	Presidential Campaign	Donald Trump 2000, Kanye West 2020, Ross Perot 1992 and Mike Bloomberg 2020 were all big losers in presidential campaigns. A relatively easy question whose real purpose was to use Kanye West in a question (see <i>Chapter 14 The Numbers Cipher and Treasure Location</i> on page 34 for an explanation of yew and ewe).
4255	G	Whose fluid approach to correctional facilities made her a millionaire on paper?	Bette Nesmith Graham	Bette Nesmith Graham (March 23, 1924 – May 12, 1980), while working as a secretary in the 1950s, she developed the correction fluid known

Commented [266]: B-Q4250 Johan Helberg

Commented [267]: B-Q4251 Walthamstow

Commented [268]: B-Q4252 Karen Brady

Commented [269]: B-Q4253 LY=GY

Commented [270]: B-Q4254 Presidential Campaigns

Commented [271]: B-Q4255 Bette Nesmith Graham

Qno	X	Question	Answer	Explanation
				as Liquid Paper. A determined person who had to fight very hard to succeed. She eventually sold out to Gillette for nearly \$50 million, a year before she died. She was not recognized immediately; her obituary was published in The New York Times in 2018!
4942	R	What special service did both the first rail journey under John Major's privatisation program, and the first rail journey under Keir Starmer's renationalisation, offer?	Rail Replacement Bus Service	Both had a Rail Replacement Bus Service for part of the journey.
4943	J	Where, of all the places in the world, might superman not go for a wash? Justify your answer to get full credit.	Jadar Basin	In 2004 a new mineral, known as jadarite, with a unique chemistry was identified in a mine in Serbia. The mineral's chemical formula - sodium lithium boron silicate hydroxide - was also written on a case of rock containing kryptonite (<i>deadly to superman</i>) stolen by Lex Luthor from a museum in the film Superman Returns in 2006. So far this mineral has only been found in one place on earth , Serbia's Jadar Basin (<i>go for a wash</i>). In 2025 scientists from the Natural History Museum uncovered why this white, nodular mineral is so rare. Their findings show that to form, jadarite must follow an exact a set of geological steps in highly specific conditions.
4944	B	Question 2746 continued. MGSC ?	BM	Captain Sir Mansfield George Smith-Cumming KCMG CB (1 April 1859[3] – 14 June 1923) was a British naval officer who served as the first chief of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). He became known as ' C ', after his habit of sometimes signing himself with a C eventually written in green ink. MI6 (SIS) will be led by a woman, Blaise Metreweli , for the first time in the foreign intelligence service's 116-year history. Announced June 2025 to take effect later in 2025. This is also thematic with Modesty Blaise and the use of the Blaise de Vigenère cipher (hinted at by the

Commented [@272]: B-Q4942 Rail Replacement Bus Service

Commented [@273]: B-Q4943 Jadar Basin

Commented [@274]: B-Q4944 BM for Blaise Metreweli

Qno	X)	Question	Answer	Explanation
				question number in the hair of Blaise de Vigenère on page 11)
4945	?	When the numbered questions are marked at the end of the hunt, the number of teams with the setter's answer will be zero or more. Identify a question with the lowest number of correct answers.	?	?
4946	-	If a=1, b=-108 and c=1152, what are x?	96 & 12	This is not so much a question as an instruction to find the treasure. a, b, c and x are the standard mathematical symbols for a quadratic equation (as hinted at by the solved number cipher). $ax^2+bx+c=0$ $x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$ There are two solutions, i.e. two bearings. Where they cross the treasure is to be found. Obviously you also need the two locations from which to take the bearings. So the answer to this question is the two bearings and the fact that they point to the treasure location
5621	R	I am on a tube train that speeds through a travel zone without stopping. Whose farmer's station might I be going to?	Rayners Lane	The Metropolitan Line is the only one that travels through a travel zone without stopping. Rayners Lane station was named after a farmer. OK perhaps Fare Zone is correct terminology but error discovered too late to change – live with it.
5622	N	What didn't happen on a Friday in the middle of April in 1930?	News	On Friday, April 18, 1930, the BBC radio news bulletin in London announced, "There is no news," followed by piano music for the rest of the segment.
5623	S	Which sea might we describe as closest?	Sargasso	"as closest" is an anagram of coastless . The Sargasso Sea, located entirely within the Atlantic Ocean, is the only sea without a land boundary. <i>OK so coastless is not a word, cut me some slack, this question setting is hard.</i>
5624	277	The bearing of A from B is 097°. Find the bearing of B from A."	277°	This is a GCSE question that looks, and is, pretty simple. However, it seem to have caused some problems in Manchester in 2024, see the link for details.

Commented [@275]: B-Q4945

Commented [@276]: B-Q4946 96 & 12

Commented [@277]: B-Q5621 Rayners Lane

Commented [@278]: B-Q5622 News

Commented [@279]: B-Q5623 Sargasso

Commented [@280]: B-Q5624 277

Qno	X	Question	Answer	Explanation
5625	B	Who occupies the Copperjax seating arrangement that became unique in 2024? Justify your answer to get full points.	Bromley FC	After the General Election in 2024, of the 92 football league teams, only the ground of Bromley FC was in a Tory seat . Their ground is known as the Copperjax Community Stadium.
7345	C	What is next in the sequence M = T MM = G MMM = D \overline{IV} = N \overline{V} = O \overline{VI} = ?	C	This is not a real question but largely a confirmation that you have started the decode of the numbers cipher correctly. The decode uses more than 6,000 letters of source text from the 12 pages of the hunt (the decode process is described in <i>Chapter 14 The Numbers Cipher and Treasure Location</i> on page 34). The letters to the left of the equals sign are of course roman numerals. M is well known as a thousand. The bar above the others indicates a thousand, at least according to some sources. So we have 1,000, 2,000, 3,000, 4,000, 5,000 and 6,000. Since the process to construct this source text is potentially error prone the identification of 5 letters at 1,000 character intervals is a check that the process is correct and the identification of the 6,000 th letter is a bonus. Also the question number is the same as the length of the source text, i.e. another check (hinted at by the clue that describes construction of the source text).
7346	S	Amongst British students, its use has fallen by half over the last two decades; it is now never or rarely used by two-thirds. What is it?	Semi-colon	<p>“Do not use semicolons,” wrote Kurt Vonnegut, who averaged fewer than 30 a novel (about one every 10 pages). “All they do is show you’ve been to college.” A study suggests UK authors are taking Vonnegut’s advice to heart; with its usage in English books plummeting by almost half in two decades. Further research by Lisa McLendon, author of <i>The Perfect English Grammar Workbook</i>, found 67% of British students never or rarely use the semicolon.</p> <p>The semicolon first appeared in the work of Italian scholar and printer Aldus Pius Manutius the Elder in 1494 but, despite its longevity, has long</p>

Commented [@281]: B-Q5625 Bromley FC

Commented [@282]: B-Q7345 C

Commented [@283]: B-Q7346 Semicolon

Qno	X	Question	Answer	Explanation
				<p>been marmite grammar.</p> <p>Lynne Truss, author of <i>Eats, Shoots & Leaves</i>, has castigated it as “dangerously habit-forming”. She added: “Many writers hooked on semicolons become an embarrassment to their families and friends.”</p> <p>Truss is not alone in her antipathy: <i>Goosebumps</i>, RL Stine’s classic horror series for children, has one semicolon for every 200,000 words. Cormac McCarthy used 42 semicolons in his first book, <i>The Orchard Keeper</i> – but then just one across his next nine novels. EL James was criticised for repeatedly using commas inaccurately instead of semicolons in her <i>Fifty Shades</i> trilogy.</p> <p>But the form of punctuation also has its staunch supporters: along with Charles Dickens, Mark Twain and Jane Austen, Abraham Lincoln stood strong on the issue. “I have a great respect for the semicolon; it’s a very useful little chap,” he said.</p> <p>Virginia Woolf relied heavily on the semicolon in her novel-length meditation on time, <i>Mrs Dalloway</i>; the book includes more than 1,000 to echo its hero’s flow of conscious thought.</p> <p>Nor could Salman Rushdie, John Updike and Donna Tartt have reached the literary heights that they have achieved without the help of an average of 300 semicolons for 100,000 words each.</p> <p>But to paraphrase the semicolon-supporting Twain, reports of “useful little chap’s” death might have been greatly exaggerated: Google Books Ngram Viewer, which includes novels, nonfiction, and even scientific</p>

Qno	X	Question	Answer	Explanation
				<p>literature, shows that semicolon use in English rose by 388% between 1800 and 2006, before falling by 45% over the next 11 years. In 2017, however, it started a gradual recovery, with a 27% rise by 2022.</p> <p>Perhaps, therefore, it will not be Vonnegut who wins out in the battle of the semicolon, but the rash, witty, louche Camille Desmoulins, as recreated by Hilary Mantel. In her novel A Place Of Greater Safety, Mantel imagined the politician, writer and best-known journalist of the French revolution having no doubts about it at all: “I wonder why I ever bothered with sex,” she quotes him as saying. ‘There’s nothing in this breathing world so gratifying as an artfully placed semicolon.’”</p>
7347	-	Which question has the most interesting answer? Maximum points will be awarded if you identify the question most teams agree has the most interesting answer.		
7348	P	Which UNESCO World Heritage Site has been built out of Lego?	Pontcysyllte Aqueduct	Completed in 1805, the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct is over three hundred metres long and stands 126 feet above the River Dee in North Wales. In 2009 UNESCO placed it on the list of world heritage sites, in the company of sites such as the Taj Mahal, Machu Picchu, the Grand Canyon and the Great Wall of China.
7349	B	He went here to test his eyesight. What was found here nearly 53 years earlier?	British Orienteering Federation	Infamously, or reasonably and legally (depending on your source), Dominic Cummings drove to Barnard Castle during lockdown on 12th April 2020. The British Orienteering Federation was founded at a meeting in Barnard Castle, County Durham, on June 17, 1967. Almost 53 years earlier.
7860	S	Which U.S. state shares no letters with its own capital?	South Dakota/Pierre	

Commented [@284]: B-Q7347

Commented [@285]: B-Q7348 Pontcysyllte Aqueduct

Commented [@286]: B-Q7349 British Orienteering Federation

Commented [@287]: B-Q7860 south Dakota/Pierre

Qno	X	Question	Answer	Explanation
7861	V	Which trial in Merthyr Tydfil raised expectations as never before?	Viagra or Sildenafil UK-92,480	At the start of the 1990s, drug company Pfizer was testing a compound called Sildenafil UK-92,480 in an effort to treat high blood pressure and angina. Volunteers started coming forward and saying, 'it's a little embarrassing, but I've noticed I'm getting more erections than usual - and the erections are a lot harder than usual'. Viagra was about to be discovered.
7862	S	Which actress with a fiery mouth and a well-known series of crushes died in 2025?	Loretta Swit	Loretta Swit, who won two Emmy awards for her role on the popular comedy TV series M*A*S*H (<i>MASH=CRUSH</i>), died on Friday, May 30th, 2025. On M*A*S*H , Swit played US Army nurse Major Margaret " Hot Lips " Houlihan. The show remains one of the most successful and acclaimed series in US television history. Its season finale was the most watched episode of any TV series in history when it ended in 1983.
7863	D	After a tragic event in 2013 who was the first, although certainly not the first or the last?	Ella Roberta Adoo Kissi Debrah	Ella, who died in 2013, was the first person in the world to have air pollution listed as a cause of death on her death certificate.
7864	J	Which apprentice electrician eventually felt the cold, and was thrown out of the army.	David Jason	David Jason trained as an electrician before starring in "A Touch of Frost". He lasted 3 hours in Dad's Army before being fired.
7966	A	What connects Waverley Station, St Paul's Cathedral and Samuel Harris?	A1 / AI.	The A1 road runs from St Paul's Cathedral to Waverley Station in Edinburgh. Samuel Harris Altman is considered one of the leading figures of the AI boom. The font used for the question is Gill Sans which displays A1 and AI the same, AI AI .

Commented [@288]: B-Q7861 Viagra

Commented [@289]: B-Q7862 Loretta Swit

Commented [@290]: B-Q7863 Ella Roberta Adoo Kissi Debrah

Commented [@291]: B-Q7864 David Jason

Commented [@292]: B-Q7966 A1/AI

Qno	O	Question	Answer	Explanation
7967	A	What is the middle name of the wheeler-dealer credited with inventing the name for a galactic shortcut?	Archibald	John Archibald Wheeler was largely responsible for reviving interest in general relativity in the United States after World War II. In a 1957 paper that he wrote with Charles W. Misner, they write: <i>This analysis forces one to consider situations ... where there is a net flux of lines of force, through what topologists would call "a handle" of the multiply-connected space, and what physicists might perhaps be excused for more vividly terming a "wormhole".</i>
7968	C	A ballerina, a queen, a bar owner in Venice, a rival of Newton and someone blessed are all thought to have a food named after them. Using the first letter of each food spell a 5 letter word? Justify your answer.	Clamp	Carpaccio; bar owner in Venice https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carpaccio Leibniz; rival to Newton https://www.bahlsen.com/en-gb/about-us/ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gottfried_Wilhelm_Leibniz "The Blessed"; Alexandertorte https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandertorte https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_I_of_Russia Queen: Margherita https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pizza_Margherita Ballerina; Pavlova https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pavlova_(dessert)
7969	C	What vegetable do some believe that Cromwell's troops brought to misnamed Pomonia?	Cabbages	Cromwell's soldiers are said to have brought the growing of cabbages to the Orkneys which is most likely a myth but more likely they did bring venereal disease! The islands are sometimes referred to as Pomona (or Pomonia), a name that stems from a 16th-century mistranslation by George Buchanan, which has rarely been used locally
7970	O	<i>Ice cream is "a la mode"</i> <i>Style is fashion running riot on the web</i> <i>"La" is exposed by the French as non-binary</i> Who wrote this?	Peter O'Donnell	Ice cream is "a la mode " Style is fashion running riot on the web "La" is exposed by the French as non-binary i.e. Modesty Blaise which was written by Peter O'Donnell

Commented [@293]: B-Q7967 Archibald

Commented [@294]: B-Q7968 Clamp

Commented [@295]: B-Q7969 Cabbages

Commented [@296]: B-Q7970 Peter O'Donnell

Qno	X	Question	Answer	Explanation
9648	H	Whose Graffiti on a canal bridge can be said to record a change in the directions of mathematics, sweeping all before it.	William Rowan Hamilton	On October 16, 1843, the Irish mathematician William Rowan Hamilton had an epiphany during a walk alongside Dublin's Royal Canal. He was so excited he took out his penknife and carved his discovery right then and there on Broome Bridge. $i^2=j^2=k^2=ijk=-1$ The mathematical problem Hamilton was trying to solve was how to represent the relationship between different directions in three-dimensional space. He invented Quaternions and vectors, still used today to solve problems, e.g. moving a robot, say, or orienting a satellite.
9649	H	In the last 20 years, which road was the location of an Acton dream that was ironically described as a lifesaver by a Californian official?	Horn Lane	Drugs used for lethal injections in the US were supplied by a small pharmaceutical company run from the back of a driving school in west London, 6/1/2011. Dream Pharma, run by businessman Mehdi Alavi from the Elgone Driving Academy in Acton, exported drugs to Arizona State prison. The drugs were shared by Arizona with California prisons resulting in the quote, "You guys in AZ are life savers ... Buy you a beer next time I get that way."
9650	E	Jim, ?, John, Pat, Neville	Enrique	Modesty Blaise is a theme of this hunt and the artists for the comic strip were: - Jim Holdaway - Enrique Badía Romero - John Burns - Patrick "Pat" Wright - Neville Colvin Artists such as Dan Spiegle and Dick Giordano are also mentioned in connection with Modesty Blaise but as far as I can determine they were not involved in the syndicated comic strip production.
9651	B	What is next in the sequence: White, Broccoli, Carrot, Cabbage, ...	Bean	These are the names initially considered for Mr Bean. According to a quote by Rowan Atkinson on the Parkinson show.

Commented [@297]: B-Q9648 William Rowan Hamilton

Commented [@298]: B-Q9649 Horn Lane

Commented [@299]: B-Q9650 Enrique

Commented [@300]: B-Q9651 Bean

Qno	X	Question	Answer	Explanation
9652	W	Which London ait is marked on Google Maps but not the Ordnance Survey?	Wet Wipe Island	Two tennis courts' worth of wet wipes have accumulated in a rotting pile by Hammersmith Bridge. Wet Wipe Island has its own Google Maps listing (it's recorded as a cultural landmark!),
9970	S	An invention by a possible relative of one of Carlsen's greatest rivals could be said to be the start of the Blue Period. What is the first name of the possible relative?	Shuji	On 26 May 2025 the International Chess Federation top 100 players started with Magnus Carlsen , next was Hikaru Nakamura (a rival). In the 1960s research into the production of a viable blue LED (necessary to produce white light with an LED) failed to get anywhere. Shuji Nakamura (a possible relative of Hikaru?) became obsessed with solving the problem and despite many setbacks (not least being ordered to stop by his employer) produced a viable blue LED in 1993 and kick started the global LED (~Blue Period) lighting revolution. Shuji Nakamura claims he was awarded USD180 by his employer for the invention. He sued and received USD8.1 million, which just about covered his legal costs!

Commented [@301]: B-Q9652 Wet Wipe Island

Commented [@302]: B-Q9970 Shuji

Appendix C Adult Crossword Clues Explained

See [adultanswers2025draft1.xlsx](#) if you want to see the links to back up the explanations.

	Clue	Answer	Explanation
ACROSS			
5	When told by Tony Blair that she would replace Jack Straw as the foreign secretary. Who said "~ I'm stunned"?	Margaret Beckett	When told by Tony Blair that she would replace Jack Straw as the foreign secretary.
6	Who was the ambassador on the receiving end of President Johnson's tirade that started "~ your parliament and your constitution. America is an elephant."?	Alexandros Matsas	In 1965, U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson said to the Greek ambassador Alexandros Matsas when he objected to American plans in Cyprus, "~ your parliament and your constitution. America is an elephant. Cyprus is a flea. Greece is a flea. If these two fellows continue itching the elephant they may just get whacked by the elephant's trunk, whacked good".
7	Who said, "Make a note there: Take on the ~ demonstrators."?	Richard Nixon	"I want them to break those windows up at the Capitol, I think," said the president of the United States. Richard Nixon had been elected in 1968 on a law-and-order platform, and he was talking about demonstrators coming to protest him and the Vietnam War, but he privately welcomed the violence. It was more unpopular than the war, so Nixon could use it to his political advantage — for example, to tar peaceful antiwar protestors with the crimes of the violent. When his chief of staff read him a poll on the protests (28 percent in favor, 65 percent opposed), Nixon said, "Make a note there: Take on the ~ demonstrators."

Commented [[@303](#)]: C-Across-5 Margaret Beckett

Commented [[@304](#)]: C-Across-6 Alexandros Matsas

Commented [[@305](#)]: C-Across-7 Richard Nixon

	Clue	Answer	Explanation
9	Who said, "Does anyone ever say, 'you know what, you've done a ~ good job [be]cause everyone else has sat on their arse and done nothing'?"?	Gillian Keegan	Following an interview on 4 September 2023 with ITV News about the RAAC crisis in a number of schools in England, Keegan, believing the recording had ended, remarked: "Does anyone ever say 'you know what, you've done a ~ good job [be]cause everyone else has sat on their arse and done nothing'? No signs of that, no?".
13	Who was being televised when the BBC unintentionally broadcast "I'm not gonna lie, but with this and Brexit we're actually ~"?	Luciana Berger	Seven members of the UK political party Labour had resigned in protest over the leadership of party Leader Jeremy Corbyn. Former Labour MP Luciana Berger was making a statement during a televised press conference, when the commentator was caught on a hot mic saying "I'm not gonna lie, but with this and Brexit we're actually ~. It's going to be really divided (...) the Conservatives are going to win."
14	Which not so civil servant declared "We're all ~: I'm ~, you're ~, the whole department's ~" after an attempt to bury bad news failed?	Richard Mottram	When Richard Mottram, permanent secretary at the Department of Transport, declared amid the resignation debacle over Jo Moore's 'bury bad news' email that 'We're all ~: I'm ~, you're ~, the whole department's ~' he demonstrated not only a clear proficiency in profanity but a knack for the forgotten art of conjugation.
15	Which doctor said in parliament that the French now regard the English as les-~-offs?	Tony Wright	I worry about what is happening to this society in a number of respects. I worry about what has happened over the past generation or so. I was told just a few days ago by someone no less than a bishop—I apologise for putting it in this way, but it is the only way I can do it—that the French now refer routinely to the English as “les ~-offs”. They do that because our culture has changed and because the presentation of our culture has changed in our media.
DOWN			
1	Which PM said "~ that" when asked if he was going to resign?	Boris Johnson	After losing two of his most senior ministers in a matter of minutes on Tuesday, an aide reportedly asked Boris Johnson if he was going to resign. “~ that,” he replied.

Commented [@306]: C-Across-9 Gillian Keegan

Commented [@307]: C-Across-13 Luciana Berger

Commented [@308]: C-Across-14 Richard Mottram

Commented [@309]: C-Across-15 Tony Wright

Commented [@310]: C-Down-1 Boris Johnston

	Clue	Answer	Explanation
2	Who said, "When the British Empire finally sinks beneath the waves of history, it will leave behind it only two memorials: one is the game of Association Football and the other is the expression '~ Off'?"	Richard Turnbull	Former British Secretary of State for Defence Denis Healey reported that the penultimate High Commissioner of Aden (1965–1967), Sir Richard Turnbull, stated that, "When the British Empire finally sinks beneath the waves of history, it will leave behind it only two memorials: one is the game of Association Football and the other is the expression '~ Off'."
3	Who told reporters "It's an FT obsession and frankly you can all ~ off. OK" when questioned about Jeffrey ³⁰ Epstein?	Peter Mandelson	When pressed in February 2025 by the Financial Times on his erstwhile association with Jeffrey Epstein, he retorted that while he regretted ever meeting Epstein and the harm he did to women: "I'm not going to go into this. It's an FT obsession and frankly you can all ~ off. OK?"
4	Which member of Trump's cabinet called him a ~ moron?	Rex Tillerson	Reports suggest that Tillerson called Trump a ~ moron. He never denied calling Trump a moron of any kind.
8	Who was described as "the emissary from planet ~"?	Ed Miliband	During one election campaign Gordon Brown's then adviser Ed Miliband was described approvingly as 'the emissary from planet ~ because he was apparently the only representative of the Treasury team who could keep a civil tongue during arguments.
10	Which BBC reporter quoted a cabinet minister as saying "~ knows. I'm past caring it's like the living dead in here", when asked why Teresa May was holding another Brexit vote?	Nicholas Watt	BBC Newsnight's political editor, Nicholas Watt, says a cabinet minister responded with '~ knows' when asked why Theresa May is holding another Brexit vote that she is expected to lose. The minister reportedly went on to say, 'I'm past caring, it's like the living dead in here'

Commented [@311]: C-Down-2 Richard Turnbull

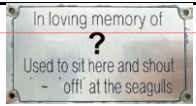

Commented [@312]: C-Down-3 Peter Mandelson

Commented [@313]: C-Down-4 Rex Tillerson

Commented [@314]: C-Down-8 Ed Miliband

Commented [@315]: C-Down-10 Nicholas Watt

³⁰ Just prior to the hunt pdf publication Ruth pointed out that I had misspelt his name as Jeffery. I decided that it was too risky to make a late change and was unlikely to be a significant issue. As far as I can tell this was a correct diagnosis.

	Clue	Answer	Explanation
11		Huw Davies	 A unique memorial plaque on a park bench has been removed. The plaque, located on the grounds of Aberystwyth castle overlooking the town's South Beach, was dedicated to a man called Huw Davies. May 2022.
12	Who said when being offered the job of Health Secretary, "~ no not Health"?	John Reid	When he was unexpectedly appointed Secretary of State for Health by Prime Minister Tony Blair in June 2003.

Commented [316]: C-Down-11 Huw Davies

Commented [317]: C-Down-12 John Reid

Appendix D Number Cipher Working Detail

Chapter 14 *The Numbers Cipher and Treasure Location* on page 34 describes how the numbers at the bottom of pages 2-11 can be deciphered. For most readers that is probably more than enough. However, some of you may be interested in my workings, especially if you found the whole thing impossible.

D.1 Source Text

	1	2	3	4	5
	12345678901234567890123456789012345678901234567890				
1	WHICHQUESTIONDIDYOUFINDTHEMOSTIRRITATINGMAXIMUMPOI				
51	NTSWILLBEAWARDEDIFYOUIDENTIFYTHEQUESTIONMOSTTEAMSA				
101	GREEDWASTHEMOSTIRRITATINGIFTHEREAREAFEWEQUALLYVALI				
151	DANSWERSALLWILLBEGIVENMAXIMUMPOINTSWHICHCENTRALLON				
201	DONRAILWAYSTATIONISNAMEDAFTERASTREETTHATDOESNOTEXI				
251	STWHOFINALLYGAVEUPLOOKINGFORTHEIRTRUEWORTHWHENTHEY				
301	GOTCLOSETOAKINGSRESTINGPLACEWHOMANAGEDTOBURYAPOORS				
351	TAGEPERFORMANCEANDEMERGEINTHEPINKINYOUAREONTHETRAI				
401	NANDHAVEJUSTMISSEDYOURSTATIONONTHELONDONUNDERGROUN				
451	DLUCKILYTHETRAINWILLNOTSTOPAGAINUNTILITSTOPSATTHESE				
501	AMESTATIONWHATISTHESTATIONHOWASTHEFIRSTENGLISHMAN				
551	TOWINTHETOURDEFRANCEWHENTHENUMBEREDQUESTIONSAREMAR				
601	KEDATTHEENDOFTHISHUNTTHENUMBEROFTEAMSWITHTHESSETTER				
651	SANSWERWILLBEZEROORGREATERIDENTIFYAQUESTIONWHEREENO				
701	OTHERQUESTIONHASMORECORRECTANSWERSINITLOOKEDTOBEMO				
751	RETHANPOSSIBLETHATALONGLINEOFPOORQUALITYNOUNSWOULD				
801	BESUPERSEDEDBYANADVERBANDMAKETHISAGREATQUESTIONUNF				
851	ORTUNATELYITWASNOTTOBEWHATWASTHEADVERBBELIEVEITORN				
901	OTACOLOURFULMANANDALOCALGARDENERMADEASIGNIFICANTCO				
951	NTRIBUTIONTOTHEWWIIEFFORTUSINGANOLDFRIDGEWHEREJUST				
1,001	IFYYOURANSWERTOGETFULLCREDITMATTHEWWEBBGERTRUDEEDE				
1,051	RLEYURIVALENTINAEDMUNDIHAVENOMOUTHBUTICANTELLYOUIF				
1,101	ASTORMISCOMINGORIFACLEARPATHLIESAHEADIAMASILENTPRO				
1,151	PHETCONSULTEDBYTHOSEWHOMUSTBRAVETHEELEMENTSMYFACEM				

	1	2	3	4	5
	123456789012345678901234567890123456789012345678901234567890				
1,201	AYSHOWABRIGHTSUNBUTMYTRUEPURPOSEISTOSPEAKTOTHEWEAT				
1,251	HERSHIDDENINTENTIONSWHATAMIWHATRANDOMAMERICANDEFIN				
1,301	ITIONOFTOILETACTIONINBECAMEASSOCIATEDWITHTBINCOWSI				
1,351	NEASTLOTHIANHASTHEONLYONEOFITSKINDTENSOFTHOUSANDSW				
1,401	EREPLANNEDINWHOFFAILEDODELIVERANIRREGULARHEXAGONWI				
1,451	THALLSIDESOFEQALLENGTHISPLACEDINSIDEASQUAREOFSIDE				
1,501	LENGHTHUNITASSHOWNINTHEFIGURENOTTOSCALEWHATISTHELEN				
1,551	GTHOFONEOFTHEHEXAGONSIDESWHATMETALSMOVEMENTCAUSED				
1,601	NEVENTTOOCCURFORTHEFIRSTTIMEEVERINHEBDENBRIDGEINAU				
1,651	GUSTANDAYEARLATERINBERWICKUPONTWEEDGIVETWOREASONS				
1,701	HYBRADLEYEWIGGINSISNOTTHEANSWERTOQUESTIONWHOINWAS				
1,751	OKENBYHISNEIGHBOURTODISCOVERANEXTRAORDINARILYLARGE				
1,801	CYPRIOTFLAGINHISGARDENINWHICHLONDONSUBURBISTHEREAT				
1,851	ESCOWITHABLUEPLAQUEINMEMORYOFARECENTPRIMEMINISTER				
1,901	HICHKARENSOLDISHOPSOILEDPOUCHMUCHLOVEDFORMORETHANI				
1,951	NTHEMIDSWHATISNEXTINTHESEQUENCELSYWMYBEWHRDWRMNSEG				
2,001	NBILLIONAIRESDONALDTRUMPKANYEWESTROSSPEROTANDMIKEB				
2,051	LOMBERGWEREALLCOMPREHENSIVELYUNSUCCESSFULLOSERSDU				
2,101	RINGAWHOSEFLUIDAPPROACHTOCORRECTIONALFACILITIESMAD				
2,151	EHERAMILLIONAIREONPAPERWHATSPICIALSERVICEDIDBOTH				
2,201	EFIRSTRAILJOURNEYUNDERJOHNMAJORSPRIVATEISATIONPROGR				
2,251	AMANDTHEFIRSTRAILJOURNEYUNDERKEIRSTARMERSRENATIONA				
2,301	LISATIONOFFERWHEREOFALLTHEPLACESINTHEWORLDMIGHTSUP				
2,351	ERMANNOTGOFORAWASHJUSTIFYOURANSWERTOGETFULLCREDIT				
2,401	QUESTIONCONTINUEDMGSCWHENTHENUMBEREDQUESTIONSAREMA				
2,451	RKEDATTHEENDOFTHEHUNTTHENUMBEROFTEAMSWITHTHESSETTER				
2,501	SANSWERWILLBEZEROORMOREIDENTIFYONEQUESTIONTHATHAST				
2,551	HELLOWESTNUMBEROFCORRECTANSWERSIFABANDCWHATAREXIAMO				
2,601	NATUBETRAINTHATSPPEEDSTROUGHATRAVELZONEWITHOUTSTOP				
2,651	PINGWHOSEFARMERSSTATIONMIGHTIBEGOINGTOWHATDIDNTHAP				
2,701	PENONAFRIDAYINTHEMIDDLEOFAPRILINWHICHSEAMIGHTWEDES				
2,751	CRIBEASCLOSESTTHEBEARINGOFAFROMBISWHATISTHEBEARING				
2,801	OFBFROMAWHOOCUPIESTHECOPPERJAXSEATINGARRANGEMENTT				
2,851	HATBECAMEUNIQUEINJUSTIFYOURANSWERTOGETFULLPOINTSW				
2,901	HATISNEXTINTHESEQUENCEMTMMGMMMDIVNOVIAMONGSTBRITI				
2,951	SHSTUDENTSITSUSEHASFALLENBYHALFOVERTHELASTTWODECAD				
3,001	ESITISNOWNEVERORRARELYUSEDBYTWOHIRDSWHATISITWHICH				
3,051	QUESTIONHASTHEMOSTINTERESTINGANSWERMAXIMUMPOINTSWI				
3,101	LLBEAWARDEDIFYOUIDENTIFYTHEQUESTIONMOSTTEAMSAGREEH				
3,151	ASTHEMOSTINTERESTINGANSWERWHICHUNESCOWORLDDHERITAGE				
3,201	SITEHASBEENBUILTOUTOFLEGODHEWENTHERETOTESTHISEYESI				
3,251	GHTWHATWASFOUNDBERENEARLYYEAREARLIERWHICHUSSTATES				
3,301	HARESNOLETTERSWITHITSONNCAPITALWHICHTRIALINMERTHYR				
3,351	TYDFILRAISEDEXPECTATIONSASNEVERBEFOREWHICHACTRESSW				
3,401	ITHAFIERYMOUTHANDAWELLKNOWNSERIESOFCRUSHESDIEDINAF				
3,451	TERATRAGICEVENTINWHOWASTHEFIRSTALTHOUGHCERTAINLYNO				

	1	2	3	4	5
	12345678901234567890123456789012345678901234567890				
3,501	T	T	T	T	T
3,551	A	A	A	A	A
3,601	S	S	S	S	S
3,651	T	T	T	T	T
3,701	N	N	N	N	N
3,751	A	A	A	A	A
3,801	L	L	L	L	L
3,851	T	T	T	T	T
3,901	V	V	V	V	V
3,951	M	M	M	M	M
4,001	I	I	I	I	I
4,051	O	O	O	O	O
4,101	C	C	C	C	C
4,151	B	B	B	B	B
4,201	C	C	C	C	C
4,251	C	C	C	C	C
4,301	E	E	E	E	E
4,351	S	S	S	S	S
4,401	I	I	I	I	I
4,451	S	S	S	S	S
4,501	R	R	R	R	R
4,551	M	M	M	M	M
4,601	V	V	V	V	V
4,651	N	N	N	N	N
4,701	M	M	M	M	M
4,751	R	R	R	R	R
4,801	N	N	N	N	N
4,851	T	T	T	T	T
4,901	N	N	N	N	N
4,951	T	T	T	T	T
5,001	M	M	M	M	M
5,051	R	R	R	R	R
5,101	U	U	U	U	U
5,151	I	I	I	I	I
5,201	O	O	O	O	O
5,251	O	O	O	O	O
5,301	B	B	B	B	B
5,351	R	R	R	R	R
5,401	O	O	O	O	O
5,451	I	I	I	I	I
5,501	E	E	E	E	E
5,551	W	W	W	W	W
5,601	E	E	E	E	E
5,651	C	C	C	C	C
5,701	N	N	N	N	N
5,751	W	W	W	W	W

	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5
	12345678901	23456789012	34567890123	45678901234	5678901234567890
5,801	URY	BADNEWS	FAILED	WHICH	DOCTORS
5,851	FRENCH	NOW	REGARD	THE	ENGLISH
5,901	EGISTER	CONTAINING	MORE	THAN	ONE
5,951	ACKIN	AFTER	DREADFUL	OR	DEAL
6,001	ULPTORS	BEST	FRIEND	WON	TELL
6,051	TEUNUSU	ALL	LARGE	ADDER	EATING
6,101	CEINVA	DEDBY	FIGHTING	HERRIBBON	IVE
6,151	GCHAIN	CRAZY	DRUNKEN	CHIMP	DISPOSING
6,201	UIET	VICTORY	ADULT	TEN	COUNTERED
6,251	DPLY	WITH	SCOTCH	WHILE	DOWNING
6,301	HATS	ABOUT	RIGHT	CALM	OLD
6,351	EDAILY	THE	FRENCH	PUT	UP
6,401	DAY	HOMES	INCLUDED	IN	CUMBENT
6,451	TOTAKE	EAT	AXIT	OSCHOOL	TOTHE
6,501	THE	LEADERS	OF	RUSSIA	AND
6,551	CONVENI	ENT	MEANS	OF	RETURNING
6,601	CILIA	IS	BURIED	WHAT	COMES
6,651	NGOF	END	FOR	THE	FRENCH
6,701	ENOS	REALLY	NOMUG	SCRATCHED	FIRST
6,751	NGTO	ABIT	OF	STUPID	EMPTY
6,801	KEDI	FHE	WAS	GOING	TO
6,851	FINALLY	SINKS	BENEATH	THE	WAVES
6,901	INDI	ONLY	TWO	MEMORIALS	ONE
6,951	BALL	AND	THE	OTHER	IS
7,001	TSAN	FTO	BSESSION	AND	FRANKLY
7,051	NED	ABOUT	JEFFERY	E	PSTE
7,101	LLED	HIM	MORON	WHOWAS	DESCRIBED
7,151	TWHI	CHB	BCRE	PORTER	QUOTED
7,201	WS	IMPAST	CARING	IT	SLIKE
7,251	HY	TERESA	MAY	WASH	HOLDING
7,301	EING	OFFERED	THE	JOB	OF
	1	2	3	4	5
	12345678901	23456789012	34567890123	45678901234	5678901234567890

D.2 Letter Distribution in Source Text

In a book code it is important to avoid repetition. My approach seemed a little vulnerable to this so the encoding process chooses the required letter by random selection of the available letters. The list below shows the available letters and I felt there was reasonable scope to avoid repetition and patterns.

- Letter: A , occurs 605 times.
- Letter: B , occurs 139 times.
- Letter: C , occurs 200 times.
- Letter: D , occurs 259 times.
- Letter: E , occurs 860 times.
- Letter: F , occurs 180 times.

Letter: G , occurs 149 times.
 Letter: H , occurs 383 times.
 Letter: I , occurs 576 times.
 Letter: J , occurs 19 times.
 Letter: K , occurs 44 times.
 Letter: L , occurs 300 times.
 Letter: M , occurs 186 times.
 Letter: N , occurs 551 times.
 Letter: O , occurs 536 times.
 Letter: P , occurs 102 times.
 Letter: Q , occurs 25 times.
 Letter: R , occurs 477 times.
 Letter: S , occurs 462 times.
 Letter: T , occurs 659 times.
 Letter: U , occurs 204 times.
 Letter: V , occurs 73 times.
 Letter: W , occurs 197 times.
 Letter: X , occurs 22 times.
 Letter: Y , occurs 132 times.
 Letter: Z , occurs 5 times.

D.3 Anchor Words

YOU starts at characters 17, 69, 386, 419, 1004, 1096, 2376, 2875, 3114, 3887, 5425, 5442, 5544, 5555, 5760, 7026.
 EWE starts at characters 138, 1246, 2029, 3228, 4012, 4528.
 YEW starts at characters 1709, 2028.

D.4 Number by Number decipherment

Enciphered number 609	Anchor point 17	clear text position 626 = U
Enciphered number 5636	Anchor point 1004	clear text position 6640 = S
Enciphered number 542	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 223 = E
Enciphered number 1905	Anchor point 386	clear text position 2291 = S
Enciphered number 6720	Anchor point 2376	clear text position 1751 = O
Enciphered number 525	Anchor point 2028	clear text position 2553 = L
Enciphered number 6447	Anchor point 2875	clear text position 1977 = U
Enciphered number 1211	Anchor point 2028	clear text position 3239 = T
Enciphered number 524	Anchor point 3887	clear text position 4411 = I
Enciphered number 1967	Anchor point 4528	clear text position 6495 = O
Enciphered number 1301	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 982 = N
Enciphered number 3025	Anchor point 1004	clear text position 4029 = T
Enciphered number 2486	Anchor point 4528	clear text position 7014 = O
Enciphered number 2186	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 1867 = Q
Enciphered number 598	Anchor point 2028	clear text position 2626 = U
Enciphered number 296	Anchor point 2875	clear text position 3171 = A
Enciphered number 6812	Anchor point 3228	clear text position 2695 = D
Enciphered number 3063	Anchor point 2875	clear text position 5938 = R
Enciphered number 1644	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 1325 = A

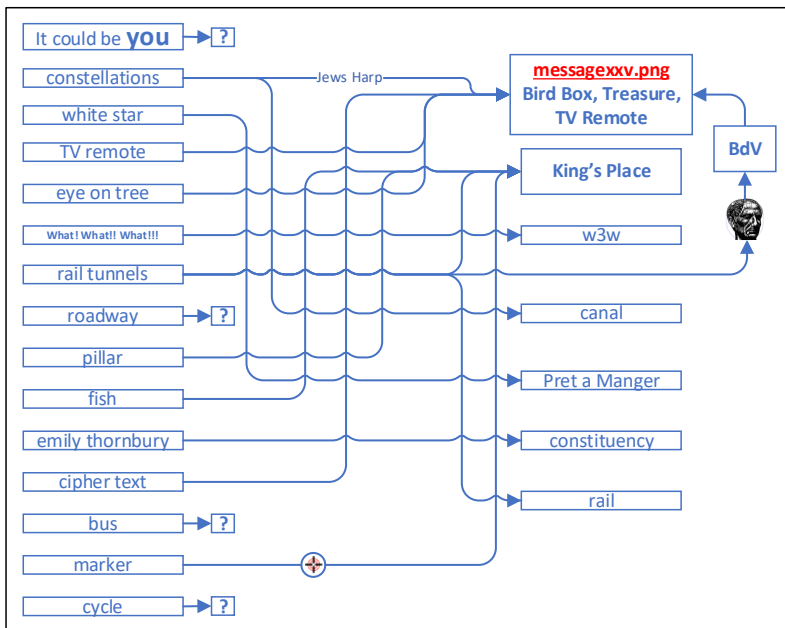
Enciphered number 5478	Anchor point 1709	clear text position 7187 = T
Enciphered number 471	Anchor point 17	clear text position 488 = I
Enciphered number 3549	Anchor point 1004	clear text position 4553 = C
Enciphered number 4321	Anchor point 5425	clear text position 2401 = Q
Enciphered number 4516	Anchor point 2875	clear text position 46 = U
Enciphered number 4138	Anchor point 69	clear text position 4207 = E
Enciphered number 2112	Anchor point 4528	clear text position 6640 = S
Enciphered number 6944	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 6625 = T
Enciphered number 7084	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 6765 = I
Enciphered number 1240	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 921 = O
Enciphered number 7113	Anchor point 1004	clear text position 772 = N
Enciphered number 1039	Anchor point 1004	clear text position 2043 = A
Enciphered number 2193	Anchor point 2376	clear text position 4569 = S
Enciphered number 6168	Anchor point 5425	clear text position 4248 = B
Enciphered number 2749	Anchor point 4528	clear text position 7277 = E
Enciphered number 5498	Anchor point 17	clear text position 5515 = A
Enciphered number 2030	Anchor point 5544	clear text position 229 = R
Enciphered number 6295	Anchor point 386	clear text position 6681 = I
Enciphered number 4539	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 4220 = N
Enciphered number 3807	Anchor point 4528	clear text position 990 = G
Enciphered number 6617	Anchor point 1004	clear text position 276 = F
Enciphered number 5824	Anchor point 386	clear text position 6210 = R
Enciphered number 4230	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 3911 = O
Enciphered number 2756	Anchor point 4012	clear text position 6768 = M
Enciphered number 2800	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 2481 = O
Enciphered number 6578	Anchor point 2875	clear text position 2108 = O
Enciphered number 1354	Anchor point 2376	clear text position 3730 = C
Enciphered number 5654	Anchor point 3887	clear text position 2196 = O
Enciphered number 6749	Anchor point 2376	clear text position 1780 = N
Enciphered number 4349	Anchor point 2028	clear text position 6377 = T
Enciphered number 2473	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 2154 = R
Enciphered number 2756	Anchor point 2376	clear text position 5132 = O
Enciphered number 5455	Anchor point 5425	clear text position 3535 = L
Enciphered number 998	Anchor point 3887	clear text position 4885 = S
Enciphered number 5322	Anchor point 5425	clear text position 3402 = T
Enciphered number 6491	Anchor point 3887	clear text position 3033 = H
Enciphered number 5935	Anchor point 3114	clear text position 1704 = R
Enciphered number 1109	Anchor point 1709	clear text position 2818 = E
Enciphered number 4887	Anchor point 2875	clear text position 417 = E
Enciphered number 5973	Anchor point 419	clear text position 6392 = A
Enciphered number 1911	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 1592 = N
Enciphered number 5057	Anchor point 1709	clear text position 6766 = D
Enciphered number 4688	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 4369 = S
Enciphered number 1246	Anchor point 4528	clear text position 5774 = E
Enciphered number 5126	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 4807 = V
Enciphered number 5352	Anchor point 5425	clear text position 3432 = E

Enciphered number 839	Anchor point 3887	clear text position 4726 = N
Enciphered number 4176	Anchor point 5425	clear text position 2256 = T
Enciphered number 5416	Anchor point 2376	clear text position 447 = R
Enciphered number 4230	Anchor point 1004	clear text position 5234 = E
Enciphered number 6351	Anchor point 5425	clear text position 4431 = A
Enciphered number 89	Anchor point 4528	clear text position 4617 = S
Enciphered number 6487	Anchor point 5425	clear text position 4567 = U
Enciphered number 6882	Anchor point 5425	clear text position 4962 = R
Enciphered number 6708	Anchor point 5425	clear text position 4788 = E
Enciphered number 6179	Anchor point 5425	clear text position 4259 = I
Enciphered number 4197	Anchor point 4528	clear text position 1380 = S
Enciphered number 3384	Anchor point 1709	clear text position 5093 = A
Enciphered number 6898	Anchor point 5425	clear text position 4978 = T
Enciphered number 3194	Anchor point 5425	clear text position 1274 = T
Enciphered number 251	Anchor point 1709	clear text position 1960 = H
Enciphered number 2804	Anchor point 2028	clear text position 4832 = E
Enciphered number 6152	Anchor point 5425	clear text position 4232 = I
Enciphered number 6265	Anchor point 4528	clear text position 3448 = N
Enciphered number 1064	Anchor point 3887	clear text position 4951 = T
Enciphered number 6768	Anchor point 5425	clear text position 4848 = E
Enciphered number 4191	Anchor point 5425	clear text position 2271 = R
Enciphered number 4123	Anchor point 2376	clear text position 6499 = S
Enciphered number 3605	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 3286 = E
Enciphered number 6995	Anchor point 3887	clear text position 3537 = C
Enciphered number 2560	Anchor point 3887	clear text position 6447 = T
Enciphered number 6701	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 6382 = I
Enciphered number 6294	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 5975 = O
Enciphered number 2992	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 2673 = N
Enciphered number 5318	Anchor point 2875	clear text position 848 = U
Enciphered number 6253	Anchor point 1004	clear text position 7257 = S
Enciphered number 2054	Anchor point 17	clear text position 2071 = E
Enciphered number 5333	Anchor point 2376	clear text position 364 = C
Enciphered number 5741	Anchor point 386	clear text position 6127 = O
Enciphered number 3156	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 2837 = N
Enciphered number 6077	Anchor point 2875	clear text position 1607 = T
Enciphered number 6236	Anchor point 1709	clear text position 600 = R
Enciphered number 3252	Anchor point 1004	clear text position 4256 = O
Enciphered number 6458	Anchor point 4528	clear text position 3641 = L
Enciphered number 5898	Anchor point 3887	clear text position 2440 = S
Enciphered number 2282	Anchor point 2875	clear text position 5157 = O
Enciphered number 3307	Anchor point 5425	clear text position 1387 = N
Enciphered number 1917	Anchor point 1709	clear text position 3626 = T
Enciphered number 453	Anchor point 3887	clear text position 4340 = H
Enciphered number 3811	Anchor point 4528	clear text position 994 = E
Enciphered number 1650	Anchor point 1004	clear text position 2654 = G
Enciphered number 3409	Anchor point 2875	clear text position 6284 = R

Enciphered number 1934	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 1615 = O
Enciphered number 4660	Anchor point 1709	clear text position 6369 = U
Enciphered number 6229	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 5910 = N
Enciphered number 3250	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 2931 = D
Enciphered number 1315	Anchor point 3114	clear text position 4429 = F
Enciphered number 1477	Anchor point 4528	clear text position 6005 = O
Enciphered number 2598	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 2279 = R
Enciphered number 3242	Anchor point 2376	clear text position 5618 = H
Enciphered number 4368	Anchor point 5760	clear text position 2783 = I
Enciphered number 3042	Anchor point 2875	clear text position 5917 = G
Enciphered number 6439	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 6120 = H
Enciphered number 4010	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 3691 = E
Enciphered number 825	Anchor point 3887	clear text position 4712 = S
Enciphered number 4470	Anchor point 5425	clear text position 2550 = T
Enciphered number 1617	Anchor point 2875	clear text position 4492 = A
Enciphered number 2090	Anchor point 4528	clear text position 6618 = C
Enciphered number 5991	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 5672 = C
Enciphered number 4637	Anchor point 5760	clear text position 3052 = U
Enciphered number 4509	Anchor point 3114	clear text position 278 = R
Enciphered number 622	Anchor point 386	clear text position 1008 = A
Enciphered number 5443	Anchor point 1096	clear text position 6539 = C
Enciphered number 4205	Anchor point 7026	clear text position 3886 = Y

Appendix E Spider Diagrams

E.1 Poster



I am not sure this is too much help to understanding the Poster but it did help me when I kept forgetting what everything was supposed to mean. The ? marks indicate that there was nothing to be learnt from these items until the hunt started.

In general there was not much to be learnt from the Poster, just a few lessons that would be useful in the main hunt:

- Ciphers would be Blaise de Vigenère (BdV).
- Files would be hidden in the site's html.
- Perhaps a number of journeys by different modes of transport.
- Start from King's Place, the last Logica office that I visited.
- The Bird Box from ATH2015 was back.

Appendix F The Christmas Message

I did not intend to issue a Christmas message. However, my judgement on Christmas Day, from observing the teams that I was monitoring, was that many were on the right track but had stalled. They all seemed to have missed, or more likely, misunderstood the instructions regarding the treasure casket on page 11. It seemed to me that if I highlighted that the 44 characters of cipher text corresponded to the 44 questions with an answer that yielded a letter then the treasure would be discovered almost immediately.

So I constructed a Christmas message with the following threads:

- Reinforcement of the Poster messages that there were 7 types of journey from King’s Place to Whippendell and a W3W focus.
- A strong hint to look at the letter yielding 44 questions
- A description of my ongoing canal boat trip through the Midlands.

F.1 Reinforcement of the Poster messages

What 3 Words	... trinity wording ... what ...
Canal	bird cemetery (Hawkesbury Junction) ... tuneful locks (Atherstone)
Constituencies	... would I find a WC (Westminster Constituency)
Pret a Manger	... where would I eat
Bus	... bus replacements
Cycle	Could I cycle ...
Train	Do I take the train ...
Road	... side of a road

Commented [@318]: F1-1 What 3 words

Commented [@319]: F1-2 Canal

Commented [@320]: F1-3 Constituencies

Commented [@321]: F1-4 Pret a Manger

Commented [@322]: F1-5 Bus

Commented [@323]: F1-6 Cycle

Commented [@324]: F1-7 Train

Commented [@325]: F1-8 Road

F.2 44 Question Hint

I didn’t want to use a sledgehammer so the fourth paragraph stated:

Thinking about it the answers to these questions are not going to get me to where I want to be.

Not a sledgehammer but what could be clearer? The questions with question numbers in italics were not going to be any use in getting to the treasure. So, focus on the 44 questions not in italics. Surely this would tell ATHers to also look at the cipher text on page 11 that most were struggling with and realize that it also was 44 characters! I expected the treasure to be found on Boxing Day³¹.

Commented [@326]: F1-9 Question numbers not in italics

F.3 Deployment Issues

There was some suspicion by a few teams that the deployment issues that delayed the Christmas Message were some kind of coded message. I wish it were so but I was on the canal boat and trying to issue the message in a hurry. I repeatedly fell foul of the

³¹ Ticket number 1 was retrieved on the morning of December 30th.

security measures that I had forgotten that I had put in place to protect the hidden file for the Poster!

F.4 My ongoing canal boat trip

The Christmas message was written whilst I was on a canal boat going from near Northampton to Kidsgrove. Most of the padding text in the message was simply facts about the boat journey. I did not include any deliberate red herrings but that was how these facts were interpreted by many teams.

We were on a tightly scheduled 7 day trip and I had left my car in the middle of the countryside near Northampton. Initially we made good progress, putting in 11 hour cruising days until Christmas Eve, when the engine just stopped without any warning. We had no real engineers on the boat but after phone consultations and local investigations we decided it was probably OK to restart and continue. Albeit that the steerer had to be constantly aware that they could lose power (and therefore steering and stopping capability) at any time. The first time that the engine stopped we ploughed into the trees at the side of the canal and removed a few branches. Subsequently we had a handful of unexpected engine stoppages where the consequences were largely benign.

I really did have a problem in getting my car back to Kidsgrove at the end of the trip. We had a deadline of noon on December 29th to be at the southern portal of Harecastle tunnel, if we missed it the next available tunnel transit slot was January 2nd. Sunday 28th looked like the best day to retrieve my car, even though the trains over the period were not great. In the end it took me 6 hours to get back to my car, drive it to Kidsgrove and rendezvous with the boat as it arrived at the bottom lock in Stoke-on-Trent just as darkness fell. To add insult to injury it took nearly 30 minutes with a screwdriver to free the only working ground paddle and get through the lock.

Appendix G Errata

During the hunt the following errata were issued. In several cases the errata were slightly cryptic to avoid leaking hints to those who had not solved the puzzle. Another problem I had as setter was that I could not change the question or crossword clue text as it would invalidate the numbers cipher at the bottom of pages 2-11.

I am grateful to all those who pointed out errors and the teams that gave me access to their workings. These actions helped me greatly in devising suitable errata.

The published errata are in the next section, where an explanation is required it is in **red**.

I should apologise to those who pointed out errors during the hunt. They each got a formal, cold, response to their enquiry about possible errors. An example is shown below, emboldened and italicized text changed for each enquiry. In my defence I was trying to give away as little information as possible ahead of any errata publication. Also I wanted all teams to get the updated information at the same time. It was a judgement call as to whether I also sent out a message on Pablo's ATH mailing list.

ATHer

Thanks for your interest in ATH2025.

Current policy is not to directly reply to this type of enquiry. You may find it useful to know that we *do/do not* intend to issue any errata on this subject.

Feel free to contact us again if not entirely satisfied....

Regards

Dave

G.1 Poster Errata

1. 2025/12/15 13:50

- The faint dots that appear to enclose the word ever and part of News in the speech bubbles are digital artifacts that slipped through the production process unnoticed, they can be safely ignored.

G.2 Puzzle Errata

1. 2025/12/18 13:15

- The adult crossword. It is fair to say that we overdid the Rs for a well known Rs. **The answer to 1 down was obviously BORIS JOHNSON but I had mistakenly added an extra R. As far as I could see this erratum was well understood (Rs = more than one R, Rs = arse).**
- 29 down, modify the answer to be monocular so that it fits. **The answer was clearly CHARLES VILLIERS STANFORD (7,8,8) but the space in the crossword was (7,7,8). The first "l" was necessary to complete another clue but the second "l" could be discarded without impact. So only one "l" was needed, hence monocular.**
- 10 across, typographical error, should be (8,7).
- 14 across, typographical error, should be (8).

2. 2025/12/18 20:30

- 8 across, there are two spellings of the answer in general use, one is a single character too long to fit the available space. Either answer is acceptable. If using the longer answer please drop the final character. **The answer is clearly RACHMANINOV/RACHMANINOFF depending on your source. The clue was written assuming the first spelling. Conveniently there were no complications to simply dropping the final character of the longer version.**

3. 2025/12/19 08:00

- Page 7 use homophone. **The circled image on the left in the centre of the page should be interpreted as HAWKESBURY JUNCTION. Unfortunately following the euphoria of successfully getting AI to generate a suitable hawks cemetery I forgot that there was an E in HAWKESBURY when I generated the Morse around**

the image. This was not a problem for most teams, but there were queries, hence the advice to use HAWKS BURY, a homophone, when using the Morse as a cipher key.

4. 2025/12/28 11:15

- You may find it helpful to replace ciphertext ...HBXSXK with ...PQGKIB. The train puzzle on the bottom left of page 8 contains arrival times. Unfortunately I found that these arrival times kept changing after I had constructed the puzzle. Therefore I checked on a regular basis. During the final check in the weeks before the hunt was released I introduced an erroneous Watford Junction into the generated Morse cipher text around the times. This was not a problem for most teams, but there were queries, hence the erratum.

5. 2025/12/31 17:45

- Question 7968. For one of the five options you are looking for a food named "by them" rather than "after them".

6. 2026/01/06 19:03

- Question 4252. Do not alter the question text but consider the question as if the first six words were replaced with **Which Karen sold I shopsoiled "la" cup**. There were two problems with this question. First Karen should have been spelt Karren, but this would have made the search too easy, so Karen italicized to hint at a complication. Secondly I got the anagram wrong, somehow. To make the anagram work I replaced **pouch** with **"la" cup**. The strange wording, "Do not alter ...", is because the question text must remain unaltered for the numbers cipher to work.

7. 2026/01/07 20:25

- The answer to one of the questions has a hyphenated surname. Please note that it is the final name that is significant. The answer to Question 7863 is Ella Roberta Adoo Kissi Debrah, at least that is how I had recorded it. In my defence this is the way it is spelt on The Ella Roberta Foundation website, <https://www.ellaroberta.org/>. However, there are multiple spellings out on the web. Some with the last two names hyphenated, some with the last three and some with the last four. I noticed that this question was becoming a hurdle to getting to the treasure site, hence the erratum. Luckily no other question had a hyphenated answer so my erratum only made sense to those teams who had solved the question and were misapplying the answer. I.e. using letter R, A, or K when they should have been using D.

G.3 Christmas Message Errata

3rd January 2026

- 23:55 Christmas Message typographical error. "... as seen at dawn the morning" should be "... as seen at dawn this morning".

G.4 Extra Clue

6th January 2026

- 19:01 To avoid the fate of one of my previous hunts I think it is time to tell you that Deep Thought missed the target by 2. My first hunt was not found by any team in the time allowed and I had to issue an extension and extra clues. I was trying to hint at this to keep teams engaged, in my experience intensity drops when you know the treasure has been found³². Deep Thought is the supercomputer in Douglas Adams' *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* built by hyper-intelligent beings to find the "Answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything," which it reveals as 42 after 7.5 million years. So you are being told that 40 or 44 is important. This is the 40th hunt so that might be significant although there are no other references to 40 and nothing that references hunt numbers. I.e. a red herring. However 44 is a significant number since it is both the number of questions from which a letter can be derived and the number of cipher text letters on hunt page 11 in the stream of pointers leading to the treasure casket. I.e. this is where you need to concentrate your attention, see 9.1 *The First Letter of the Answers* on page 26.

³² In fact the treasure was found a week before this clue was issued, but by no other teams at this date. Not one of the 13 other teams that I was observing seemed able to make the final, ~ simple, breakthrough. I didn't want to end up with only a few teams getting to the treasure, as had happened with all my previous hunts – hence this extra clue. It looks like I should have issued more.