

Treasure Location

From ATH

We found the treasure on the morning of 18 December (yes, the day after the Hunt was published!) in Famous Copse, Broadplat.

One of our team had run in the area in May (<https://www.strava.com/activities/1556524657>) (through Earl's Wood, although not Famous Copse or the Treasure Trail), June (<https://www.strava.com/activities/1628080879>) (including the section of footpath with photos 5, 4 and 3 from the Trail) and July (<https://www.strava.com/activities/1718019194>): actually through Famous Copse, and past the locations of photos 11 to 3, although in reverse order.

Roger takes up the story.

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First visit to the treasure site

Being familiar with the general area, I recognised the two Nettlebed photos immediately, quickly confirmed Stonor, and guessed that the kiosk (number 3) could be at Greys Court. While searching in vain for on-line confirmation (Greys Court is popular with photographers!), I stumbled across a picture of the large fallen tree (photo 4) but initially thought that I'd have to scour the grounds for it. The aerial Google Maps view of the farm buildings at Broadplat offered a plausible match for photo 5 (where the hollow initially looked like a good treasure location!), but the key find was a photo of the kissing gate, number 6 on the trail. This was taken from the other side, but after some mental gymnastics I convinced myself that it was the same gate. The aerial view gave a plausible jumble of timber to match photo 4, on the same line. Of course the as-yet-unidentified photos of beech trees would be a perfect fit for the beechwoods in the area, and there were some promising field corners on the map. I didn't recall any pine forest in Famous Copse, but I knew that the valley bottom in Earl's Wood was coniferous, and the tree stump in photo 12 could well be there.

Meanwhile the team had picked up the James Bond theme and a few of the books were falling into place. One book per page, one Treasure Trail photo per page, treasure location within say 150m of the photo shown on the page of the final published book - what could be easier? Sometime after midnight I was pretty confident that I had enough photos in sequence to give the direction, and (with the week off work) I emailed the team to say that I'd decided to pay a visit in the morning.

At that stage I was still expecting the final photo to be in Earl's Wood. The team's second great spot was the faint 'CW' underneath the arrow in photo 9, tentatively identified as the "Chiltern Way, which passes through Stonor". A bit of further research revealed its southern extension, from Bix Bottom and past Greys Court. Game on!

I set off mid-morning, driving straight through Nettlebed because I knew I could return for photos of the brick kiln and the Joyce Grove gates. Parked at the roadside at Broadplat. First stop was the tree bole by the barns, confirming photo 5, then the kissing gate (6). Telegraph posts going across field gave photo 7, and there was the distinctive broken tree (8) where the footpath enters the woods.

The arrow on the tree, just inside the woods, was partly obscured by holly and I missed it first time. Approaching the cross-tracks, I was looking for any of the arrow, the field corner and the knobbly tree. At the junction I knew that I had to follow the Chiltern Way straight on, but checked out the field corner (passing within a couple of metres of the knobbly tree!) and found that it didn't fit. Returned to the northbound Chiltern Way and continued past several other arrows that didn't match. Knew that I had to continue on CW though, and that there were some good field corners coming up.

The second field corner matched. I still had the arrow and the knobbly tree to find, with a bit of Chiltern Way to come in Famous Copse, and then the descent into Earl's Wood. Reached the far corner of Famous Copse without recognising any further photos. As the photos had been coming thick and fast up to the field corner, I suspected that I might have missed a couple and that 'down in the valley' was too far. Moreover, in the interior of Famous Copse were some pine trees, some brambles, some rootstocks and some stumps. I headed off-piste.

After checking out a few stumps and lots of brambles NW, W and SW of correct site, I got back to the Chiltern Way and the field corner. Looking left (and no longer searching for an arrow or a knobbly tree, I spied a promising stump less than 100m away. As I approached, I realised that it was clearly the one in the photo. Went to it, took the required photo, then went round the back wondering where to start looking for a treasure site, with the textual directions that we didn't have.

But what's this? Unnaturally parallel sticks. Box in black plastic bag underneath. Yes! Read the instructions, riffled through the cards, took what looked like earliest Casino Royale card (surely book 1 is what we need). Checked watch on way out: 11:30.

Back at the junction by the first field corner, I spied the knobbly tree: smaller than I'd expected. Running forwards while looking backwards for arrows isn't really recommended, but I stayed upright and soon found photo 9. Used the short-cut footpath to pick up the one to Greys Court. Big tree exactly where expected. Kiosk perfect (not at all easy to tell from aerial photo, and surprisingly there appear to be no photos of this nice pagoda-style building on internet). Text team captain with the good news that we have a Casino Royale card (and a full set of photos), but asking him to check which book cover was earliest. Then the book-cover fun began.

Book Covers Puzzle

There were 38 book cover cards in the box, along with an instruction card, which said: "If you're searching for PablosATH Treasure, congratulations, you've found it. If not, could you please put this box back where you found it so as not to spoil the fun for everyone else. There is no monetary value associated with the Treasure.

ATHers: one more puzzle: select the card that represents the earliest published from those enclosed and send a photo of it to 07889 089597 along with your team name (or email to mike.wood@cgi.com). Take the card home with you and replace the rest and re-hide the box. Thanks Mike. "

This caused a lot of anguish. Initially, I took the earliest-looking cover for the first novel, Casino Royale, but texted Steve from the Greys Court kiosk seeking confirmation that it was the earliest cover. Steve phoned back to say that the first edition cover featured the 9 of hearts but before we could discuss the details, my phone died. However, I definitely needed to make a...

Second visit to the treasure site

I ran back, collected the green cover with the 9 of hearts, took some photos of the others, and headed off in search of a phone charger and a wi-fi signal. Fortunately, my mother lives in Henley. The wi-fi wasn't great and something was wrong with the photos though: previews of the last few all looked black. I attached them anyway, and emailed them to Steve. By then we'd realised that some of the other covers were published before both the yellow Casino Royale cover (1963) and the green 9 of hearts one (1965) that I'd taken instead. I needed to make a...

Third visit to the treasure site

Refusing offers of cups of tea, I returned to Broadplat and took the by-now-familiar path through the woods. Rang Steve, who'd been doing sterling research. But then a warning: phone, unused to such activity, was about to run out of credit. Steve rang back. Phew. We went through descriptions of several cards, eventually plumping for the yellow Goldfinger cover, published in 1962. It started to rain. I photographed all the other cards in sets of five or six, then headed for home, via Nettlebed for some gloomy photos of the brick kiln and the Joyce Grove gates.

Back at home, I realised the cause of the black photos: while putting my iPad back into my bum-bag, I'd activated 'burst' mode on the camera. I had approximately 200 photos of the inside of the bum bag. Worse, we discovered that several of the covers were earlier than the Goldfinger one, including Live and Let Die (artwork produced in 1957, UK edition 1957 on one website but 1959 on Piz Gloria, which was also becoming familiar). We corresponded with the setter, pleading not to have to undertake the trip of 45 minutes each way in the rain and the dark. He agreed to credit us with a find on 18 December, and said that he'd mark the Book Cover puzzle separately. Phew. Again.

All evening, I fretted. Wednesday dawned bright. I decided I needed to make a ...

Fourth visit to the treasure site

Parked a bit closer and used the footpath in past Lawrence Farm. Swapped Goldfinger for Rex Archer's Live and Let Die cover. Drove home, still fretting: it was priced at '50¢'. Was the US edition later than the UK one? And why did Piz Gloria say that it was published in 1959? Was it actually later than the red 1958 Diamonds Are Forever cover, also by Rex Archer? Did I need to make a...

Fifth visit to the treasure site?

No. <http://www.collecting-fleming.com/photos/more-info/pan-painted-series-live-and-let-die-1st> confirmed that the '50¢' marking was Canadian (and not US), and that this was indeed first published in 1957, one year before the Diamonds Are Forever cover. We also found a 1957 Canadian copy for sale on Amazon, complete with the 50¢ sticker. Phew. Again. The full list of covers and publication dates follows.