

## **PABLO'S ATH 2019 – “THE MULLITOVERS”**

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Treasure location: In a tree, near the banks of Blackweir Pond, Epping Forest, Loughton  
Treasure found: 1140, 7 Jan 2020  
Ticket number: 15

### **THEMES**

Ruth Rendell, mud, crime writers, mud, Gordon Banks, mud, hunt/hunters, mud, ATHEXIT/Brexit, mud  
For clarification, we are considering “ATHEXIT” to cover (as per the Poster) Brexit, The Wizard of Oz, and a bit of Ruth Rendell thrown in for good measure.

Each page from 2 onwards was based on a (crime) writer. There were various clues to help identify the author in the form of pictures, codes, numbers, letters, etc.

Codes seen: Playfair, Vigenere, Hill, Acrostic, Substitution, Caesar shift, Morse,

### **Envelopes**

Each page from 2 onwards had a section inside a series of envelopes. These were the instructions for the final route to the treasure. There were 3 codes on each page, either Playfair, Vigenere or Hill ciphers. The number of envelopes (either 25 or 26) signified the length of the alphabet for the (Hill) codes.

The type of code could be identified by font/colour/bold/italic – Playfair font for Playfair, in grey or black; red for Vigenere; black, bold & italic for Hill.

There were also pictures which identified the type of cipher to be used, along with a thematic link to the author for that page.

Each page from 2 onwards (apart from 10) had a photo of part of the route to the treasure, associated with the coded instructions on the same page. The pages were to be used in ascending numerical order, apart from Page 10, which came first.

There was a Ruth Rendell link on each page.

There was a hunt/hunter/ATH link on each page.

### **HOW WE FOUND THE LOCATION**

When the poster came out, we thought the final article was referring to searching for the treasure. As the image for it was a silhouette of Greater London, we decided we were looking for a (probably large) wooded area inside the M25. We narrowed it down to either Hampstead Heath or Epping Forest, with our best guess being Epping Forest!

Once the hunt started, we realised that Question 1 on Page 9 was the moonset time for the treasure location. However, it was some time later that we decided to map this out (too busy with codes up to that point!)



The lines from right to left are moonset on Christmas day at 1523:30, 1524:00 and 1524:59. This narrowed our search area down to the east side of London. We figured out that the picture of the bicycle on Page 12 was likely to be outside a café or pub, so we searched for pubs near Epping Forest. A quick scan of the names didn't make anything stand out, so we went back to Google Earth. Looking for pubs close to Epping Forest, the first one we visited in Streetview was the Forester's Arms, and there was the bike! Either a lucky punt, or we are getting better at this hunting malarkey!

## **HOW WE FOUND THE TREASURE**

Initially we were expecting to have to order the treasure instructions (and possibly the photos too, in a different order), as the mention of the runged tree and the photo of it were on different pages. However, once we identified the area, we managed to find a few of the photo locations from Google Earth, and figured out that everything looked to be in page order. The last page we decoded was Page 10 (which I hope everyone else took a while over too!), but we had already worked out the start point, having identified the alleyway on Page 2. We also worked out that the treasure must be near Blackweir Pond.

The day we went hunting (Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> January) was clear and dry; however, the mud was still there in abundance. I only nearly fell over about half a dozen times and somehow managed to not actually fall over at all, I don't know how though!

Starting from Ruth Rendell's Blue Plaque, in Millsmead Way, the route was very straightforward to follow (sorry, navigate – the mud made it rather difficult to follow!) with the assistance of the photos and decodes. Our two concerns were that the roman numerals might be a padlock combination rather than a tree number (with a certain amount of artistic ambiguity to figure out the exact number) and that there might be a final challenge inside the box. It was a relief to spot other numbered trees en route to the pond, and the final location was easily located. I was equally relieved not to have to use my chronological list of all Ruth Rendell's books in anger!

There wasn't an obvious alternative route back to the pub, so I retraced my steps back through the quagmire (although it did give the opportunity for more "Muddy Boots" photos):

