The Pinboard - The Stamford Puzzle

By Matt Edwards & Nick Perry

Keeping up the momentum of their success uncovering the fishy red herring in SHERRINGton at the end of July (see the September 2008 *Newsletter*), super hunters Paul Harkin, Martin Dennett and Clive Weatherley thought they'd cracked the Pinboard on 22 September when they identified a location in Lincolnshire looking remarkably like the blueprint shown on *The Pinboard*.

They had concentrated on the map in the top right of *The Pinboard*, which at first glance appears to be from an Ordnance Survey Landranger sheet. Paul had concluded a while ago that some geographical elements on the map were too unusual to be real, and concluded the map could not be a real place, but he was unsure what the map did represent.

There was much discussion in private between members and indeed some chat on the bulletin board about what the map could be. It wasn't until we published a clue in issue 96 of the club *Newsletter*, at the end of September that things became clearer. We said:

'Bjorn is not part of the border message. Bjorn, the grey mountains, the spider's web and Forest Gate relate to the map on which a queen bee has been strategically placed.'

This clue turned out to be pivotal in identifying the map. Beorn's house (Bjorn), spiders' webs, a forest gate and, crucially, The Grey Mountains are all features in JRR Tolkein's fictional Middle Earth. In particular, Paul discovered *The Hobbit* includes a map of Wilderland, which contains those four elements and whose features are reproduced in exactly the same positions (but in a different style) on the Landranger style map.

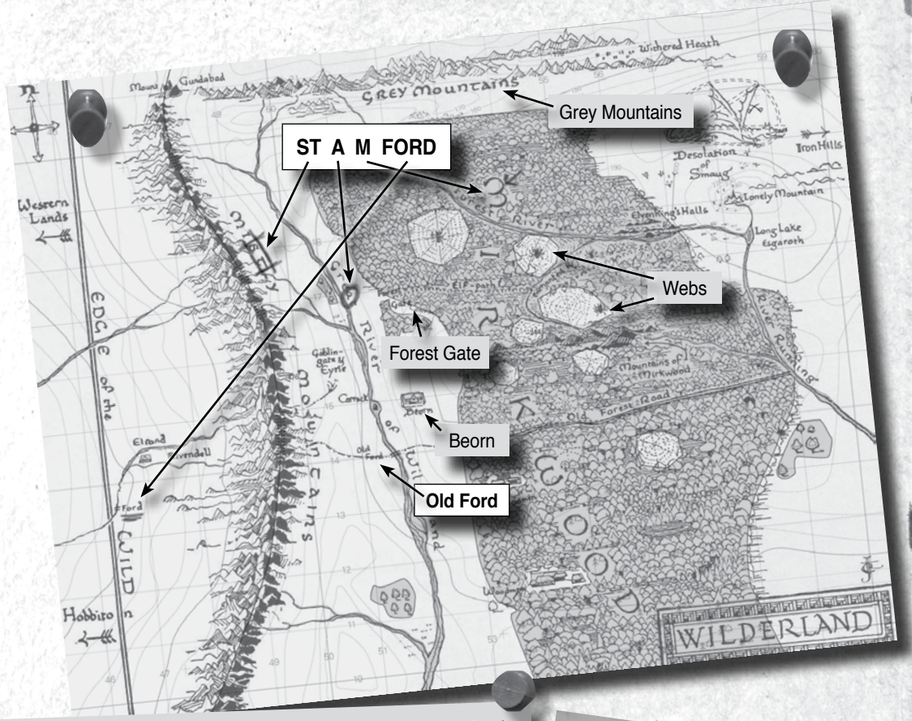
Having identified the Wilderland map Paul then transposed the hand drawn markings from the 'OS map' on to Tolkein's map. The markings pick out the letters ST, A, M, FORD—spelling out the old Lincolnshire town of Stamford.

In fact Mike Smith had already made this discovery without our clue. With the help of his family he'd identified the Wilderland map on Boxing Day 2007—not long after the hunt was released. Working with Stephen Hallam, they'd identified Stamford early in the New Year. But without the courage of their convictions, and distracted by the border message, Mikey ended up wandering an area near Stamford without success.

The last part of our clue pointed out that the picture of the queen bee was 'strategically placed'. On Tolkein's Wilderland map, the queen bee would be sitting directly on top of the 'Old Ford'.

As, perhaps the name of the town suggests, there is, indeed, an old ford in Stamford, and after some research on the internet, and in particular Geograph, Paul found pictures of the site of an old Roman ford, located at TF0206, curiously marked by a brick and concrete bench identical in form to the blueprint in *The Pinboard*. For confirmation, a plaque on the bench refers to Queen Boadicea; hence the 'strategically placed' queen b(ee).

A slightly circumspect Paul phoned us to say he thought he had solved *The Pinboard* but was concerned he'd shortcut the proper solution as he'd only used about a quarter of the hunt to get to this point. We told Paul he hadn't solved *The Pinboard*, but suggested he still let the intrepid Martin Dennett visit Stamford.



Using the blueprint with a big 'X' on it as a guide, not even Martin 'two tries' Dennett could fail to dig in the right spot, and indeed he quickly located the exact burial site of a curious glazed pot, marked 'Stamford', sealed with wax. Inside Martin found:

- an Australian 1oz silver dollar featuring a kangaroo;
- an egg made of stone; and
- a silver charm bracelet.

Paul and Martin solved the Stamford puzzle correctly using:

- the large OS-style map;
- the street map of Forest Gate;
- the pictures of Bjorn Borg, the spiders' web, the grey mountains, and the queen bee; and
- the engineering drawing (blueprint).

By solving the Stamford puzzle, Paul and Martin have secured a stake in the main prize, which remains buried. Everyone in the club still has a chance of securing their own stake, and helping to find it.