

Miglia Quadrato

Notes for Newcomers

For newcomers to the Miglia, we have put together some introductory material. Nothing is better than experience in triumphing on this unique event, but by following these guidelines you may well avoid some of the many pitfalls that ensnare competitors.

Equipment

In addition to a map and romer, you will certainly require writing implements and a torch. A clipboard for the route card (A4 size) will help – we certainly appreciate legibly answers! Also important is that answers should be entered in the rightmost column. Please do not “fill in” the spaces in the question, but write your answer in the last column. Spare biros/pencils can be very useful.

The torch does not need to be anything other than a standard hand held lantern. You will see some crews with high powered search lights, but these are not necessary and often illuminate so intensely that an answer may be unreadable. This may sound counter-intuitive, but the secret of any lighting is to enhance contrast. This is especially important with old, faded inscriptions, etc. Where an answer is of carved (or raised) lettering then oblique lighting may be the only way to read it. Light from the side casts a shadow effectively increasing the contrast and so making the answer readable. Flat on lighting may, in some cases, hide the inscription and competitors have been seen departing convinced that there is no answer. Of course, such tricks of lighting are not necessary for the *easy* category and rarely for those listed as *medium*. Certainly, the organisers have no recourse to anything other than a basic hand held lantern.

Much depends on the weather: so be prepared with waterproofs (just in case), although in recent years many have passed the night in shirt-sleeves. Do carry some drink and other refreshments in the car – it is a long night and you will not find any 24-hour stores in the City! And do remember to fill up with fuel before reporting to the start – you will not find petrol stations in the City nor any open nearby.

Plotting

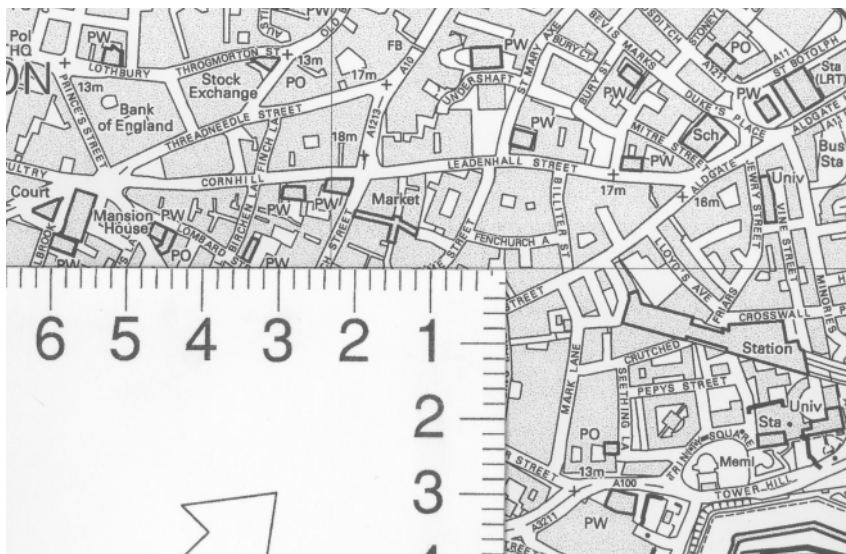
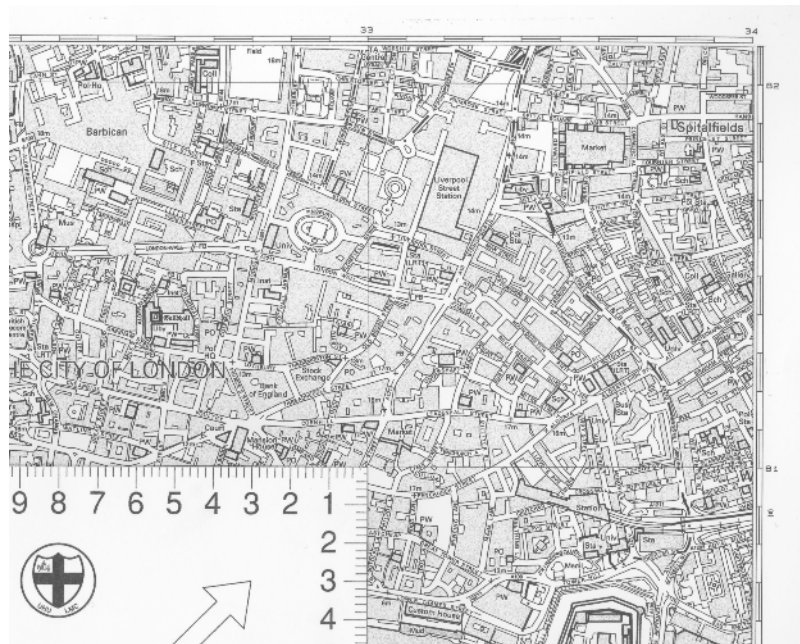
There is no trick to the plotting. All clues are located via a pair of four digit coordinates. These are known as eastings and northings. The four digits are of the form 123.4 . Starting with the first four digits, these identify the west-east location of the plot. The first two digits will be seen to correspond to the value of one of the grid lines running vertically on the map. The next pair of digits indicates how far to the right of this line the plot will fall. Taking an example plot of 332.3 811.6 the easting value is 332.3 . This places the point at 2.3 to the right of the 33 grid line. With the map used, the scale simply converts to centimetres. There are 10 centimetres between grid lines and so this plot will lie 2.3 centimetres to the right of the 33 grid line. In other words this indicates the plot will lie somewhere on a line 2.3 centimetres to the right of the 33 grid line and parallel with it.

The second value in the example can be explained similarly and will locate a position 1.6 centimetres above the horizontal 81 grid line. So, the location is somewhere on the line 1.6 centimetres above the 81 grid line and parallel to it. Where these two lines intersect is the location.

The provide romer is a tool for simply locating the point on the map. The upper and right edges of the romer are marked in centimetres (with millimetre divisions). The romer should be trimmed (see right).



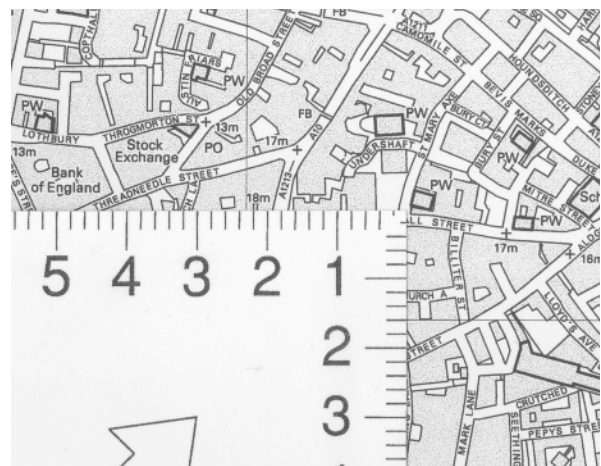
In this example locate the intersection of the 33 and 81 grid lines. Position the romer so that its upper right corner is at the intersection (and it is aligned with the upper edge along the 81 line).



Slide the romer horizontally to the right by 2.3 centimetres (i.e. until its 2.3 measure is at the 33 grid position).

Now, making sure to maintain the orientation of the romer, slide it vertically upwards by 1.6 centimetres (i.e. until its 1.6 measure is at the 81 grid position). The upper right corner of the romer will now be located at the correct grid position and the map may be marked accordingly.

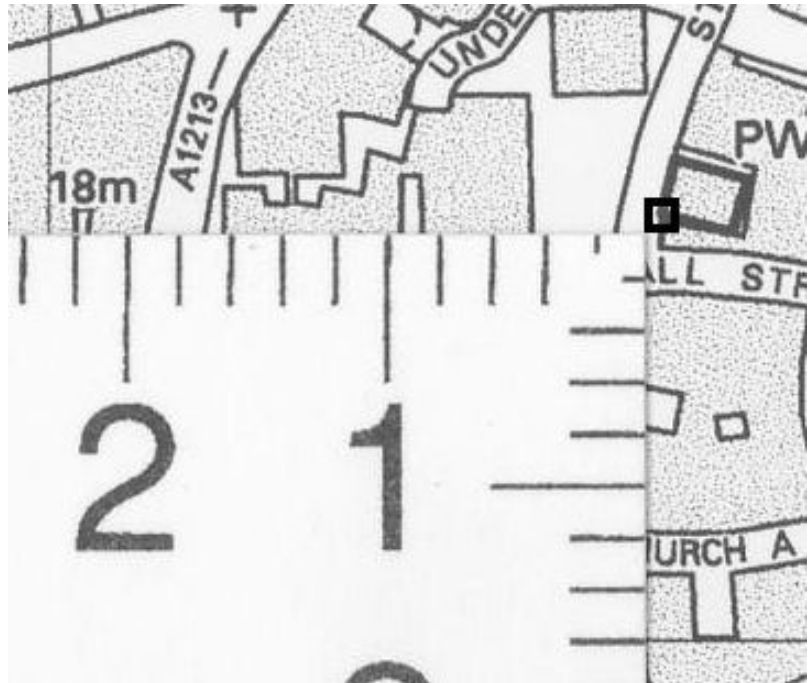
[The examples are with romer and map as we supply – all our plotting is done with this equipment.]



Searching

Plotting of the points was covered above. However, it is *very important* to remember that the point you plot is *not* the precise location of the clue, rather it is the south-west (i.e. lower left) corner of a 10 metre square within which the clue will be found. It is *not* the centre of a circular area. This is shown on the following picture which completes the plotting sequence.

The actual search area is shown by the bold square. The plotted point is at the south west corner (lower left) of this. Consequently you should search only on the east (right) of the street (St Mary Axe) and not stray into Leadenhall Street. Note that the corner of the church is contained in the square, not the alley which runs along its northern edge.



The plotting of clue locations is done by the organisers on the same scale and edition map that is offered to competitors. We do not avail ourselves of any larger scale map and rely on features as shown on the map to pinpoint the location. We take great care with the accuracy in plotting.

So, having plotted the point you should confine your search to a square that extends 10 metres to the east of the point and 10 metres north. If you plot accurately you will save your crew from futile searching over large areas. Successful teams are disciplined: plot accurately and search just the plotted area. Yes, it can be tempting to wander down the street. Perhaps other teams are searching elsewhere: check your plot and if it is correct ignore the others. If you do not quickly find the clue, check the plot. That is far more profitable than strolling in random directions.

We speak from years of experience. Each year we encounter crews who have correctly plotted the point but then search elsewhere! Of course, the classification of the clue has some bearing. *Easy* clues can generally be seen readily, even from the car, and almost definitely without torches. A typical *easy* clue will be a “blue plaque” or a clearly inscribed architect stone. If you are on the right plot an *easy* clue should be identified promptly.

Medium clues will require more determined searching. They are likely to be smaller, or situated so your attention is drawn to something else. Many will benefit from torch, but with street-lighting most can be located without.

Our strongest advice is that newcomers and, indeed, any but the very experienced should not even attempt the *difficult* section until they have visited all *easy* and *medium* clues. It is perfectly feasible to find all 40 *easy/medium* clues and this will virtually guarantee a first class award.

If you really insist on looking for the *difficult* twenty (and we hope you have already achieved forty correct answers) you will come to realise that they are genuinely difficult. Possibly a small plate shaded from a casual (or not so casual) glance. A stone which appears to have no carving upon it until viewed with a torch at just the right angle. Perhaps a date that is in shadows high above. Maybe there is an alley that backs onto the wall you are searching – check your map (bear in mind clues will be viewable from areas to which the public has free access). Does a window have a small etched mark upon it? Is there a maker's name visible on a broken brick in the wall? A ten metre square may not seem large – but when you do not find a clue it is very tempting to wander aimlessly and look at “more interesting” objects.

Worth emphasising is that the Miglia ***does not use cryptic clues***. Questions are worded precisely and upper case letters are used to designate quoted text. When dashes are used to indicate letters/words/numerals to be completed the quoted parts are accurate. If an answer does not exactly fit the quote or fails to answer the question – then it is wrong!

The route card notes:

Dashes in the questions indicate words, letters, or numbers to be filled in. Quotations are denoted by CAPITAL LETTERS. There are no trick questions. {Omitted, or illegible, parts of quotations are indicated by dots - these do not require completion.}

We do urge you to pay attention to the above when reading clues – especially when one person reads from the route card to crew members. Be sure they are aware of what is quoted text. If you have any doubts concerning an answer it is probably incorrect! The required answer will be obvious and exactly answer the question.

We have photographed some typical clues – with appropriate questions to give a flavour of the route card.

Obviously, these were photographed in daytime to give a better idea of the overall environment. At night, you would need to locate these by streetlight or torchlight. The former will be adequate for the vast majority of *easy* and *medium* clues, although a torch may assist with reading inscriptions, etc.

Taking a typical Easy example, a view of the location might appear as:



Even on this view it is easy to see a Blue Plaque at the left of the entrance. Indeed, by street light it is quite clear. A typical question for such clue might be: "Year DESTROYED IN THE GREAT FIRE?" The bold text is a direct quotation and fits the object exactly. The answer would simply be 1666.



We would probably consider this one of the more obscure *easy* clues as it is somewhat concealed from the road. However, it is straightforward to locate once on site and the only time taken would be to transcribe the answer correctly.

A clue of *medium* difficulty can be seen in the following general view.

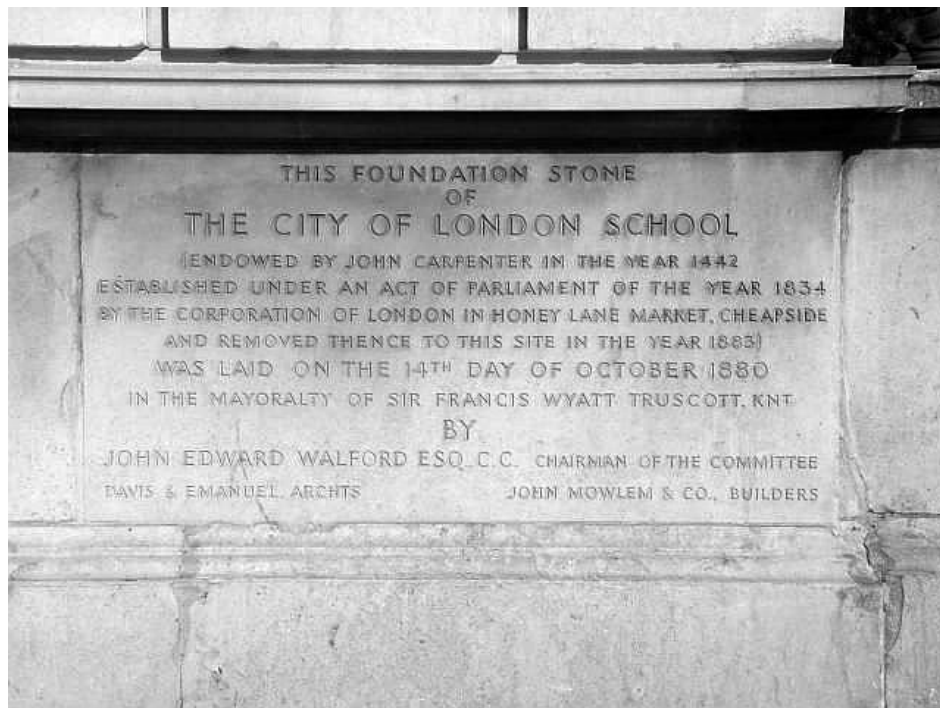


Note that there is also a blue plaque visible (which would be considered *easy*). Christine (one of our dedicated marshals) is pointing at a particular stone in the building. From this shot all that you can note is that its texture is subtly different from the neighbouring stones. [Incidentally, the view is little different at night.] If you were to study that stone you would see that it carries an inscription.



Printed in this way it is hard to read, but torchlight (or even ambient street lighting) would suffice to reveal the text. Here is a clue that is not immediately apparent yet once found can be read without difficulty. Hence a *medium* classification.

Whilst considering *medium* clues, it is important to emphasise that there are no trick questions. An easily read stone (once located) is shown:

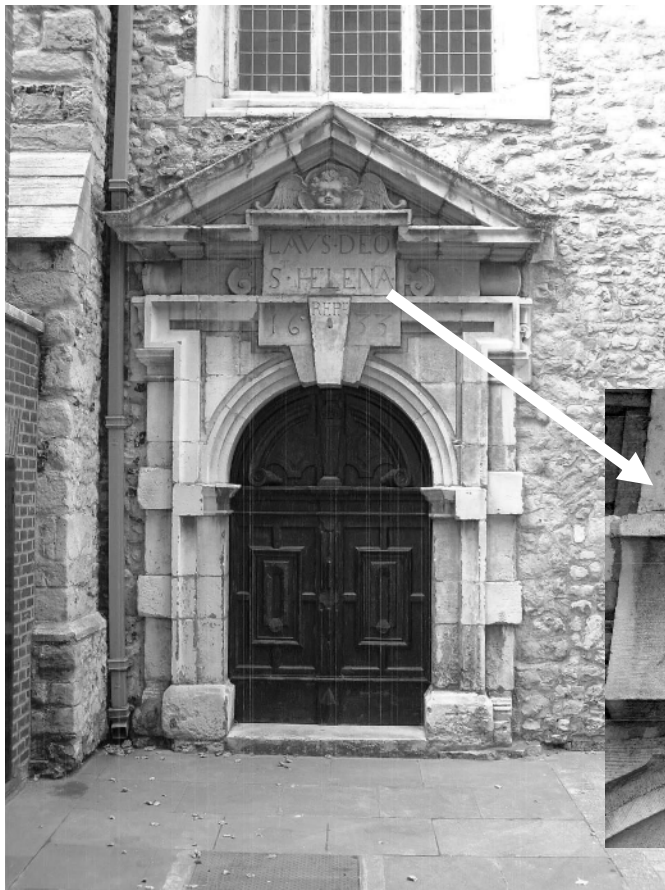


For the question “Who were the BUILDERS?” you would be looking for the quoted word BUILDERS in full (exactly as printed). The expected answer would be JOHN MOWLEM & CO.

Were the question “Who were the ARCHITECTS?” then this stone would **not** bear the correct answer. You would need to search elsewhere (on plot). Had we sought the answer DAVIS & EMANUEL the question would have been “Who were the ARCHTS?” Quoted text is exact. [Normally we would avoid any such confusion, but it should alert you to the fact that you are not looking at the desired object.

Another question that might be answered from this stone is “. . . HONEY LANE _____ . . .” The dots indicate text before and after that quoted with the underlining indicating a word missing immediately after HONEY LANE. The correct answer would simply be MARKET.

Medium clues are generally not hard to find yet not instantly obvious. There may well be objects that the eye passes over without the seeker giving a second thought. For example the following shows a scene with many areas to search, yet the answer to the question “What in 1994?” can be found at the base of one of the bollards.

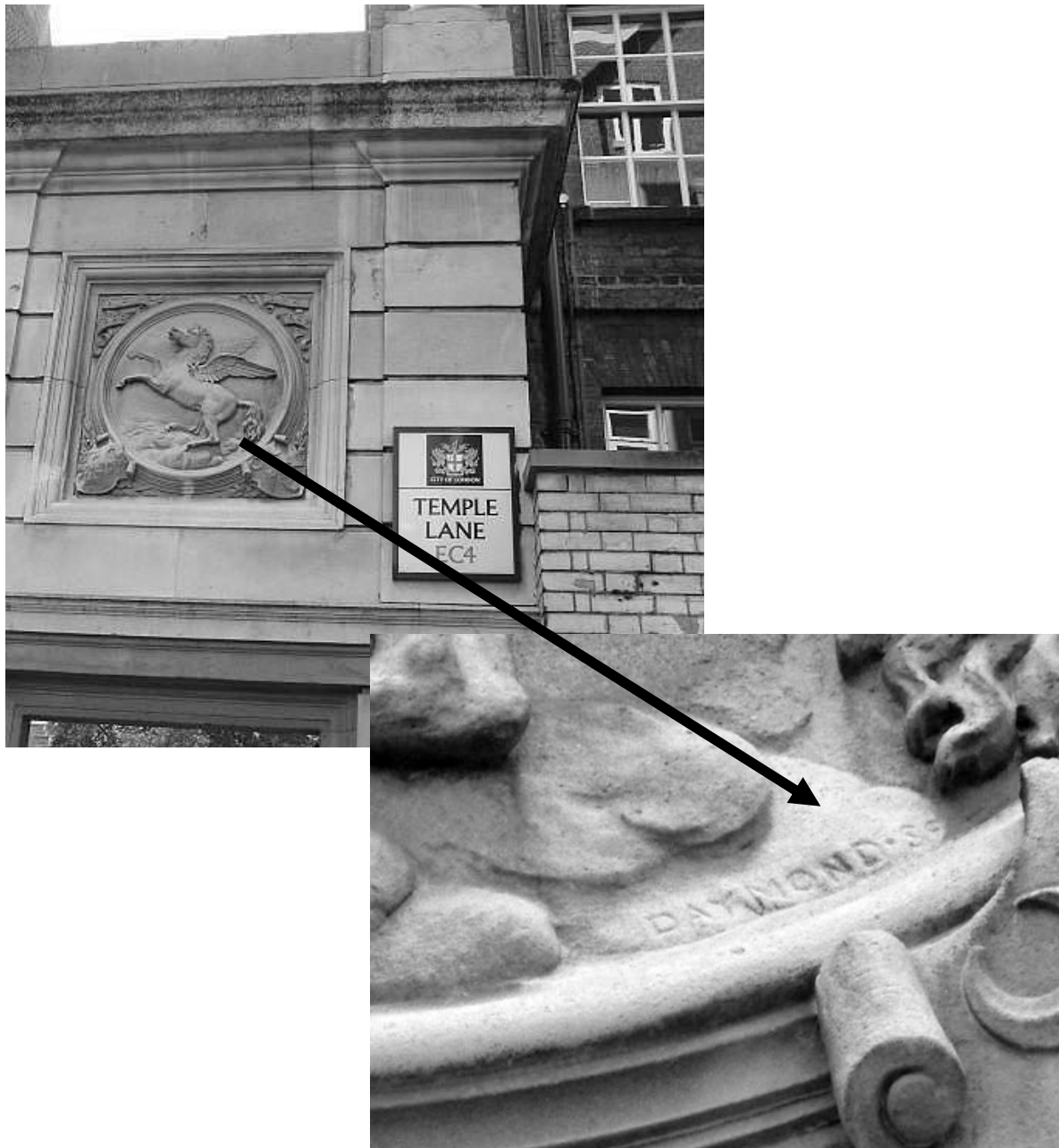


Or consider the following – the clue is not difficult to read, but must be found on the stonework. A typical clue would be Year REP.^d? [Answer: 1633]
Note that we have retained the punctuation.

Clues can be low or high.



The difference between *difficult* and *medium* is that the *difficult* clues are genuinely difficult to locate. The foregoing examples of high and low would be reasonably tough *medium* clues; however *difficult* ones can pose other problems. For example, a sign that has been over-painted may appear devoid of anything of interest. But oblique light may well reveal subtly raised letters of text that once was there. Similarly, inscriptions on gravestones crumble and fade with time – only diligent searching will reveal them. Many objects have inscriptions that indicate their creator – the following is one such.



We trust this gives a small taster! Please bear in mind that no clue is in an unsafe location – you should not wander in busy streets. Where there is traffic, clues will be visible from the footpath.

Driving

The final instructions must be read – they give details of potential street closures using the latest information possible. Moreover they give some notes regarding major one way systems. It is important that all competitors comply with relevant traffic rules and the instructions of any police officer. The City has many one-way streets and turn prohibitions: please take great care to avoid traversing one-way streets incorrectly (so after searching for a clue think before turning round). Watch out for (and observe) no right turns, no entries etc.

It is not a race: the event is won through accuracy of plotting and diligence in searching.

In parking, please observe double yellow lines etc. We do take a lot of care in locating clues and try to avoid areas where it is unsafe to stop, e.g. adjacent to railings between roadway and pavement. But it is not possible to guarantee parking at each clue: some will be in small alleys or other areas where vehicles are prohibited. You will have to walk from the car in some places. So park sensibly and safely. [There are traffic wardens on duty throughout the night – so be aware of any restrictions.]

It is worth noting that people live in the City – so please shut car doors carefully. Do not shout to team members (purely selfishly, this could alert a competitor that you have just found an elusive clue). We try very hard to avoid known residential places. By and large, if you find yourself in a residential area you are probably off-plot.

Teams are expected to stay together and with the car.

Strategy

An interesting topic. We doubt that all crews will agree with our recommendations, but much depends on your plotting ability and whether you are comfortable doing this in a moving vehicle (possibly whilst navigating). So, what we suggest:

After receiving your route card at the start, return to the car and start plotting. Plot just the *easy* and *medium* clues. Ideally one crew member will dictate the references to the navigator who will use the romer and mark the map (e.g. circle the point and – importantly – number it). It can be helpful to sort the references by map square and dictate accordingly; this speeds the task of the navigator. Double check each reference after it has been plotted (saves a lot of pain later). This may well take half an hour. The navigator can then determine a sensible order in which to tackle the clues.

At each point visited, the navigator should identify the plot location and clearly show the crew the ten metre square to be searched. Bear in mind your crew may have no idea of which is north and east. One person should be in command: they should be firm in restraining team members from wandering without purpose. They should also have decided how much time can be afforded in searching for each category of clue. If it is not found in this time – move on. Or, perhaps, if it is not found in half the budgeted time ask the navigator to check the plot. Do not spend time fruitlessly searching for an elusive clue – you will be preventing yourself from gaining points elsewhere. Bear in mind the comments above on classifications: *easy* clues should be immediately apparent. If you have not found it you are in the wrong place. Whilst the actual searching time is a team decision, it is suggested that no more than 10 minutes is spent on any one clue, and that 5-6 minutes should be the target for *medium* clues. No *easy* clue should take more than a minute if the plot is accurate, but newcomers may find 2-3 minutes acceptable until they are attuned to the event and become more familiar with accurately reading the map and learning the types of clues used.

The route card must be handed in at the finish between 4:30 and 5:00 a.m.: so as the clock approaches 5 a.m. make sure you know how far you are from the finish. You will lose a mark for every minute late: in the past we have seen this penalty cost victory.

Check List

- Torch (one for each crew member)
- Spare batteries
- Clip board (for route card)
- Pencil/biro
- Map board (plus the map and romer)
- Car fuelled
- Change for toilets
- Waterproofs/jumpers
- Drink (e.g. water, thermos of coffee)

Final Words

Please do remember people live and work in the City. It is important that we cause the minimum disturbance possible and your efforts in this are appreciated.

Drive sensibly and safely. Please compete quietly and unobtrusively – if approached by a security guard or member of the public please take time to explain. Let them know the police are *aware* of the event and it has been running for many years. [Please do not infer that the police have given permission: technically they have raised no objection.] If they are anxious (or wish to complain) please offer to take their contact details and pass these to us at the finish. In the unlikely case that the location of a clue is causing annoyance please stop searching in that location – again let us know at the finish (or inform a travelling marshal). We take every effort to check for habitation near each clue. So do re-check your plot!

Do remember to arrive with your vehicle fuelled. Bring some change for superloos or the facilities on Liverpool Station (also a charge, but should be open all night).

The main thing: the event is for your enjoyment. We try to create an event that is enjoyable for everyone, from newcomers to seasoned experts. Follow our tips and we are sure you too will enjoy the night – hopefully you will become a regular and introduce friends and colleagues.

Our best wishes to you all.

Have fun!

The Committee, UHULMC

© Copyright in all location and clue photographs belongs to Adrian and Christine Clark. We are grateful to them for their permission to use them in this guide.