

READ ONLY AS FAR AS YOU NEED

Hints for steps 1–3

Read only the hint you need, then try again. Cover the rest of the page with a sheet of paper if that helps. Solutions start on page 3 of this file.

Step 1 / Where did Mo put it?

Hint 1: Start with the rooms. The Garden Store has the flags. Which item does Sam rule out of the Ticket Office?

Hint 2: The Ticket Office must hold the bell. Crate B went somewhere else, and Mo says the bell would not fit in A. Which crate is left?

Step 2 / Who collected the bell?

Hint 1: The Ticket Office clock is slow. Work out the difference between the two timepieces, then add it to the time on the borrowing slip.

Hint 2: The collection happened at 2:24 official time. Cross off everyone whose job was still in progress then. Someone whose job ended at 2:19 was free.

Step 3 / Where was it sent?

Hint 1: Use the note belonging to the person you identified in step 2. Turn the page as you trace the route if left and right are getting confusing.

Hint 2: Follow Kit's note. Go east to Pond Fork, then north across the wooden bridge. At Bridge Junction you are facing north: the path on your right goes east.

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Hints for steps 4–6

Each stage uses an earlier answer. If your answer seems to fit nothing, check the preceding step before starting again.

Step 4 / Which train?

Hint 1: The parcel was ready at 2:53. Cross off any train leaving before then, even if it calls at the right place.

Hint 2: You need Willow Halt. Of the trains left, one reaches it after the 3:15 deadline. Which one arrives in time?

Step 5 / Choose the parcel

Hint 1: The job number is also the parcel number. Add the punched top-row number to the punched bottom-row number on each ticket.

Hint 2: Two parcels have the number 47. Only one of those also travelled on Finch. You need both matches.

Step 6 / Get back before four

Hint 1: Find a walk from the Ticket Office to Willow Halt and add its minutes. Double that for the return, then add two minutes for collection. Compare another route.

Hint 2: Try Ticket Office > Old Mill > Bridge Junction > Willow Halt. Compare it with going through the Garden Store. Remember that the Boathouse-to-junction path is closed.

THE CASE EXPLAINED

Solutions for steps 1–3

Step 1 / Crate C in the Ticket Office

The Garden Store has the flags. The Ticket Office cannot have the flags as well, and Sam says it does not have the lantern. It must have the bell. That leaves the lantern for the Workshop, which received crate B.

The bell therefore cannot be in B. Mo says it would not fit in A, leaving **crate C**. The full arrangement is A: flags, Garden Store; B: lantern, Workshop; C: bell, Ticket Office.

Step 2 / Kit, at 2:24

When the official time was 2:00, the Ticket Office clock read 1:54. It was **six minutes slow**. Add six minutes to the slip's 2:18: the bell was collected at **2:24**.

At 2:24, Mo, Ruth and Elsie were still at their jobs. Kit's tour ended at 2:19. Under the stated rules, Kit was the only person free to collect it. Using the uncorrected time would wrongly point to Ruth.

Step 3 / Willow Halt, parcel 47

Kit's route goes from the Workshop east to Pond Fork, then north across the wooden bridge to Bridge Junction. Facing north, the first path right goes east to **Willow Halt**.

The job card says the parcel number is the job number: **47**. It was ready at 2:53 and had to reach the desk by 3:15. Keep both times for the timetable check. The job card also authorises Nell to collect the bell.

THE CASE EXPLAINED

Solutions for steps 4–6

Step 4 / Finch, arriving at 3:13

Fern (2:46) and Robin (2:50) left before the parcel was ready at 2:53. Fern also does not stop at Willow Halt. Wren leaves late enough but arrives at 3:18, after the 3:15 deadline. **Finch leaves at 3:00 and arrives at 3:13**, meeting both conditions.

Step 5 / Rack position 4

The fourth tag has 40 and 7 punched: **47**. It also names **Finch**. Position 2 has the same number but names Robin. Position 1 is Finch 27; position 3 is Finch 44. Only position 4 matches both parts of the record.

Step 6 / Back at 3:55

The quickest route is **Ticket Office > Old Mill > Bridge Junction > Willow Halt**: $6 + 3 + 5 = 14$ minutes. Returning the same way takes another 14. Add two minutes to collect the bell: $14 + 2 + 14 = 30$ minutes. Leaving at 3:25 means returning at **3:55**, with **five minutes to spare**.

The route through the Garden Store is also a successful rescue: $6 + 4 + 5 = 15$ minutes each way. With collection it takes 32 minutes, returning at **3:57**. Credit getting back in time, then invite the group to find a quicker route. The prompt asks for the quickest, but this is sensible work too.

Why the bell disappeared

Kit borrowed it for a repair and a farewell surprise. The borrowing records identify Kit; the job card records the split strap and its replacement; the final card explains the surprise for Arthur and why Kit sent it to Willow. Those are three separate pieces of evidence. It was not stolen.

THE CASE EXPLAINED

The last train

Nell's reply

I got back before four. The bell was wrapped in a tea towel, with the old strap tucked underneath. Kit had remembered the repair, the parcel and Grandad's surprise. He'd forgotten I needed the bell first.

I called everyone aboard. Nobody heard me over the engine, so I tried the bell. That worked.

After the train had gone, Kit brought Grandad over. Grandad ran his thumb along the new strap and asked who had done the stitching. Then he rang the bell, quite a bit louder than I had.

Sam came out of the office. "They've gone, Arthur."

"I know," said Grandad.

He put the old strap in his coat pocket. I didn't ask what it might come in useful for.

Nell

Notes for the playtest

Record the players' ages, setup time, play time and hints used. Note where anyone stopped, guessed or needed an adult to explain the instructions.

Ask which part they enjoyed most and which dragged. Could everyone contribute? Did the map and punched tickets print clearly? Did the ending make sense? Would they choose another case with these characters?

This is a private prototype. Real playtesting must establish difficulty, enjoyment and age guidance. Internal checks cannot establish those things, and no playing time is promised yet.