

A NOTE FROM BRAMBLEWICK RAILWAY

The Bell for the Last Train

The last train leaves Bramblewick at four. After that, the little railway closes for the winter.

This year I get to ring the brass bell to call everyone aboard. I've practised the announcement. I've even found my cap. I haven't found the bell.

At first I thought Mo had put it away when the roof leaked. But there is a borrowing slip as well, and someone has ordered a new leather strap. I've put all the papers together. They make rather more sense when they aren't blowing across the platform.

It matters today. Grandad Arthur is retiring after the last train. He taught half the volunteers how to do their jobs, although he still tells everyone they're holding the ticket punch upside down.

Can you find the bell, work out why it was borrowed, and help me get it back before four?

Nell

PLAYING TOGETHER

Print these eight pages and find a pencil. Keep the separate hints and solution closed. Put the map (page 5) where everyone can see it. No cutting, hiding, railway knowledge or device is needed.

Work through the six steps in order. Everything you need is here. All records are accurate and from the same afternoon, but the bell **moves over time**. All possible borrowers and relevant trains and parcels are shown.

Take turns reading, tracing routes and checking details. If stuck, use one hint for that step. There is **no real countdown**: use the printed story times.

Suggested test audience: around 8-12 with an adult. Age and duration await playtesting. All characters and places are fictional.

STEP 1

Where did Mo put it?

At **2:10**, Mo had finished packing crates **A, B and C**. Each held one different item: bell, small lantern or flags. There was exactly one crate in each room: Ticket Office, Workshop and Garden Store. This was **before anything was borrowed**.

MO'S NOTEBOOK

The bell wouldn't fit in A with the lid shut. Used another crate. All three items packed separately.

DELIVERY RECEIPT

Crate **B** delivered to **WORKSHOP**.

Received by Ruth.

GARDEN STORE CHECK

The crate delivered here contains the flags. They are dry.

Elsie

TICKET OFFICE CHECK

Crate checked. It does not contain the lantern.

Sam

OPTIONAL WORKING GRID / TICK YES, CROSS NO

Item	Ticket Office	Workshop	Garden Store
Bell			
Lantern			
Flags			

At 2:10, the bell was in crate _____ in the _____.

Now follow the later borrowing record on page 3.

STEP 2

Who collected the bell?

Sam recorded the moment the bell was collected **in person** from the Ticket Office. The name is smudged. It was exactly one of Mo, Ruth, Elsie or Kit.

BORROWING SLIP

BRASS BELL / Collected at 2:18
Time copied from the Ticket Office clock.

CLOCK CHECK

The station watch keeps the official time. When it read **2:00**, the Ticket Office clock read **1:54**. It stayed the same number of minutes slow all afternoon. Every other time in this pack is correct.

These jobs kept everyone at their posts for the **whole interval**. Nobody could leave. Outside their listed interval they were free to collect the bell. These are their only relevant commitments.

Volunteer	Job	Busy from ... until ...
Mo	Holding a ladder at the platform	2:15 - 2:32
Ruth	Holding a clock mechanism in the Workshop	2:20 - 2:31
Elsie	Helping unload plants at the Garden Store	2:10 - 2:25
Kit	Showing a school group round the signal hut	2:05 - 2:19

Correct collection time: _____. Borrower: _____.

Keep that name. Follow only that person's delivery note on page 4.

STEP 3

Where was the parcel sent?

Sam has copied the volunteers' notes. Use the **walking map on page 5**. Left and right mean your left and right as you walk. None of these routes uses the closed path.

MO / From the Workshop, walk north to the Boathouse, then north again. Leave my package in the building at the end.

RUTH / From the Workshop, walk east past the pond. Turn left and cross the wooden bridge. Carry straight on to the next building.

ELSIE / From the Workshop, walk east past the pond, then east again to the Old Oak. Turn left to the next building, then continue north to the following building.

KIT / From the Workshop, walk east past the pond. Turn left and cross the wooden bridge. Take the first path on your right after the bridge and follow it to the building at the end.

WORKSHOP JOB CARD / 47

Old brass bell. Requested by the borrower on page 3. Original strap split beside the buckle. New leather strap fitted and tested. Old strap enclosed; do not throw it away.

Parcel sealed and ready at **2:53**. It can go only on a train leaving Bramblewick **at or after 2:53**. Send it to the place in the borrower's note. It must arrive **no later than 3:15**, before the parcel desk closes.

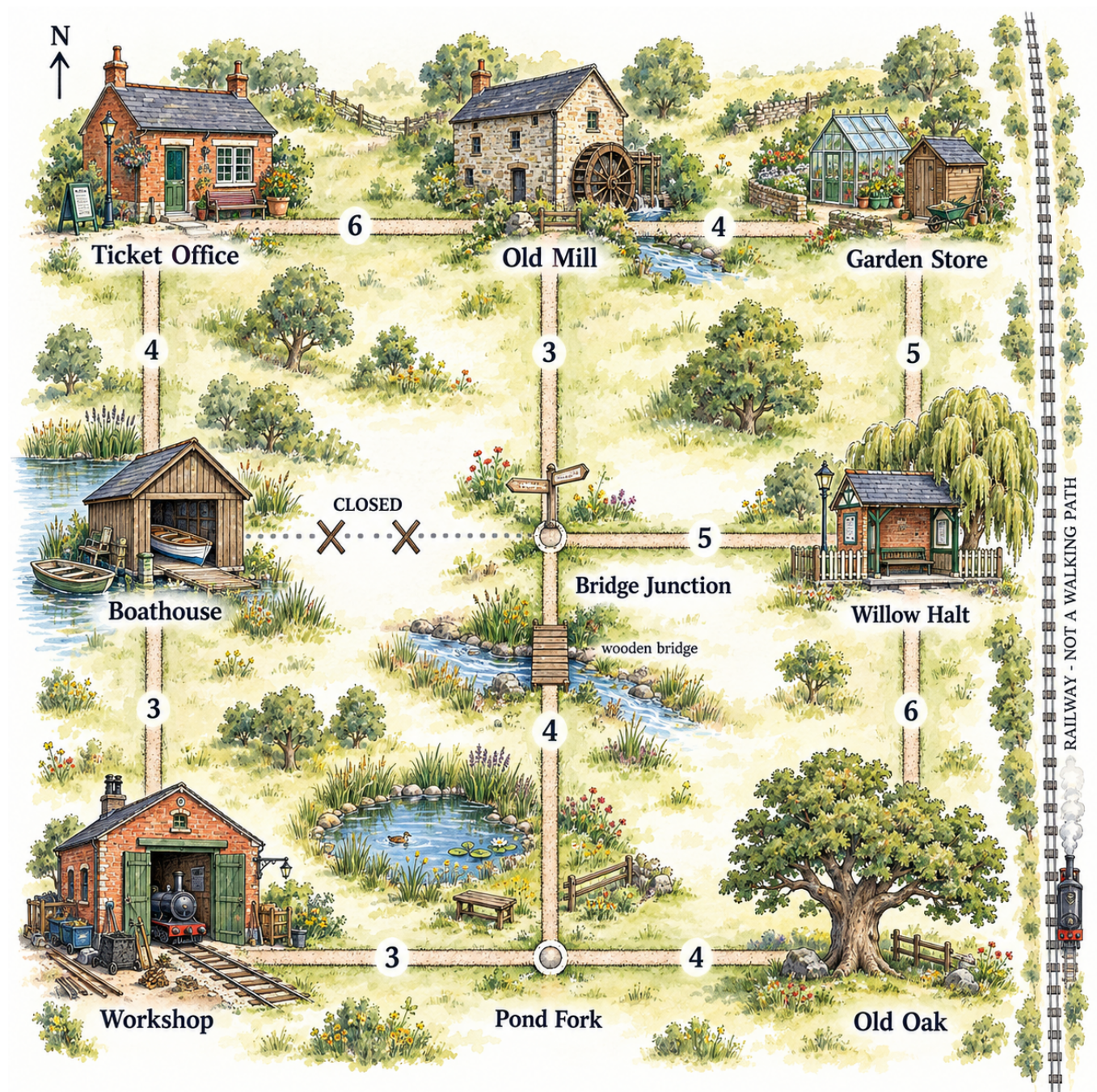
After closing, parcels awaiting collection go on the covered public rack. Nell is authorised to collect this bell. Parcel number = job number. Sam used the only train meeting both times. The parcel has not moved since delivery.

Destination: _____. Parcel number: _____.

THE RAILWAY GROUNDS

Bramblewick walking map

North is up. Numbers show **walking minutes one way**, the same in reverse. Nell walks at these times. Use only the numbered footpaths.



The crossed-out path is closed. Railways, grass and water are not walking routes. Only the numbered footpaths connect the named places; there are no shortcuts.

Use this map twice: first to follow the note, then to plan Nell's journey.

STEP 4

Which train?

Use the ready time, destination and deadline from page 4. Stop times are when parcels reach the desk. A dash means **no stop**. All these times are correct.

Train	Leaves Bramblewick	Oak Crossing	Willow Halt	Mill End
Fern	2:46	2:52	-	3:06
Robin	2:50	2:56	3:01	-
Finch	3:00	3:06	3:13	3:20
Wren	3:10	-	3:18	3:28

Chosen train: . Arrival time: .

Why can't the other three carry this parcel?

READING A PARCEL TICKET

One number in **each row** is punched. A black dot is the hole; the number stays visible beneath it. Add the two punched numbers to read the parcel number.

10		● 20	30		40		50	
1	2	● 3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Example: 20 + 3 = parcel 23. Match both the train name and the parcel number on page 7. Rack positions do not encode anything.

STEP 5

Choose the parcel

Four parcels are waiting at your destination. Black dots are punched holes. Compare **both the train name and number** with your answers. Please leave other people's parcels alone.

RACK POSITION 1

FINCH

BRAMBLEWICK PARCEL SERVICE

10	20	30	40	50				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Please match both rows and the train name.

RACK POSITION 2

ROBIN

BRAMBLEWICK PARCEL SERVICE

10	20	30	40	50				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Please match both rows and the train name.

RACK POSITION 3

FINCH

BRAMBLEWICK PARCEL SERVICE

10	20	30	40	50				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Please match both rows and the train name.

RACK POSITION 4

FINCH

BRAMBLEWICK PARCEL SERVICE

10	20	30	40	50				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Please match both rows and the train name.

Rack position: _____. Parcel number: _____. Train: _____.

STEP 6

Get back before four

It is **3:25** by the correct watch. Nell is at the **Ticket Office**. She must walk to the parcel, spend exactly **two minutes** collecting it, and walk back to the Ticket Office by **4:00**. The parcel is already on the covered rack: there is no waiting.

Find the **quickest route** using the map's open paths and walking minutes. You may use the same paths out and back. No railway or closed path.

Quickest route, naming each place:

One way: _____ minutes. Collection: 2 minutes. Total: _____ minutes.

Back at: _____. Minutes left before four: _____.

AN EARLIER NOTE AMONG THE WORKSHOP PAPERS

For Arthur, after the last train has gone.

You brought the bell back into use when we reopened the railway. You should ring it on your last afternoon here. I've had the split strap replaced and kept the old one. I know you don't throw anything away if it might be useful.

I've sent it to Willow to keep it out of sight. I'll fetch it when the platform is clear.

Kit

CLOSE THE CASE

Who borrowed the bell, and why? Where did it go? Which parcel should Nell collect, and can she get back in time? Use **three separate records** to explain your answer. Do the repair and the surprise explain the disappearance?

Now open the solution. The ending is there too.