World Wide Treasures 2 - Aquaterra – The Solution

The story holds a few little clues about the general theme of the hunt. It mentions dinosaurs, eggs, a bird on a coin (there actually is a German coin with the picture of an Archaeopteryx) and a feather. The feather on the little photo is from a European Jay. The Archaeopteryx is considered a "missing link" in the evolution from reptiles to birds, and it is often portrayed with colourful feathers.

"Archaeopteryx" is the word you get from the crossword puzzle. The horizontal words are all names of places which are hidden in the little story about Aquaterra.

Aquaterra or "Land of Water"

Aquaterra is a small community that is famous for its inventive people. There, for dozens of weeks every year, the locals organise competitions and fairs celebrating their latest inventions and ideas. Farmer Jacobsen recently came up with a new portable box for delivering his vegetables. Farmer Robson managed to breed paler, more robust cucumbers, which the local deli makes into a salad with bananas, sauerkraut and rice. Some of the farmers sell their produce to tourists or rent out their fields to people from Elgaria City. Aquaterra is surrounded by beautiful lakes. Their water looks crystal clear and they are a paradise for bird watchers. What started as a mad ridiculous idea, has become a big success story. People from towns and cities all over the world come to visit.

Written by Charles Tonicella

The substitution cipher below the crossword translates into:

"WHEN YOU HAVE FOUND THE MISSING LINK, FLY TO THE SMALL TOWN NEAR WHICH IT WAS DISCOVERED AND LOOK DOWN ONTO THE COLLECTION OF TREASURES FROM ANCIENT TIMES. THE PAVED SQUARE RIGHT OUTSIDE IT HOLDS THE KEY FOR YOUR NEXT CHALLENGE."

All known Archaeopteryx fossils have been found near the small town of Solnhofen in southern Germany. The Bürgermeister Müller Museum in Solnhofen has a big collection of fossils found in the nearby quarries. During the Jurassic period the area used to be a tropical sea with coral reefs, and like the Jurassic Coast in England, it is very rich in fossils. On the square outside the museum you can see the pattern of an ammonite from above. So "ammonite" is your key word.

The clock is made of limestone from Solnhofen, the patterns you can see are crystal dendrites, not fossils.

The cipher below the coin is a Playfair cipher, as hinted at in the text and the Wikipedia page which the QR code takes you to. The "QR" also indicates that Q gets translated into an R. When you use "ammonite" as a key to this Playfair code, it gets decoded to:

"Turn around this coin and find the nickname for the object on the other side. It is also the title of a famous poem. Its author wrote a poem about something closely related to our key."

The coin is a 20 Ruble coin (minted 2010) from Belarus. On one side is has the colourful hologram of a wind rose that you can see in the hunt. On the other side is the ship U.S.S. Constitution. Its nickname is "Old Ironsides", a term created by Oliver Wendell Holmes Senior in his poem with the same name.

Holmes also wrote a poem called "The Chambered Nautilus". A nautilus is a so called "living fossil", which is related to ammonites.

The "number salad" is a book cipher with a (line, word) and (line, word, letter) format. Using this cipher in combination with the poem "The Chambered Nautilus" gives you the following instruction:

"From the museum travel west for twenty three miles. Descend into the crater and visit Daniel's town. Go around the old wall and find the heavenly symbol with seven points. Face north, the treasure is under the closest tree."

23 miles west of Solnhofen is the town of Nördlingen. It lies in the centre of a large impact crater, which was created by a meteorite strike about 14 Million years ago. The picture on the top of the last page shows a slice of a meteorite. Daniel is the nickname of the tallest church steeple in town. The town wall is still complete, and near its north side you can see the star shape with seven points in a garden. The treasure is hidden under the tree closest to the northernmost point of the star.