

Signed, Sealed and Delivered.

Hi,

I could kick myself! In fact, there have been two occasions in the last month when I could have happily given myself a good boot up the backside.

Why, you might ask, this unseasonal bout of bad-will?

Well, it's to do with books, as you might have guessed, but more specifically to do with *Signed Books*. Collecting books, hand signed by the author, has been a hobby of mine for some time now. Without doubt a book signed by the author is far more collectible and valuable than a plain unsigned copy. It usually costs you no more to buy brand new (if you keep your wits about you) and makes a nice addition to your book collection, and has added cache if you are planning to re-sell for a profit, on EBay for instance.

However, my wits have not been very sharp of late and I have missed a couple of really good opportunities. I was walking through our local shopping centre in Welwyn Garden City earlier this month, just beginning to think about Christmas gifts, when I spied a tall well lit glass display case, just stacked to the gills with the new hardback 'My Story' by Lewis Hamilton, the rookie Formula One racing driver and Hertfordshire's local hero.

The big sign above the stack of books announced that Lewis was due to be personally signing copies of his book at Maher's bookshop upstairs. And yes, of course, I had missed the book signing by one day! I rushed upstairs to see if they had any spare additional copies that he may have signed for the bookshop, but alas, they were all gone.

I took my eye off the ball, literally, again last week. when I read in our local paper the 'Welwyn & Hatfield Times', that Bob Wilson, a goalkeeper who is remembered fondly by Arsenal and Scotland fans, had dropped by our local WH Smith's to sign copies of his new book 'Rucks, Pucks and Sliders'.

In short, I had missed another opportunity to pick up a valuable hand-signed copy of a newly released hardback. Oh well...I really should listen to my own advice, keep alert and plan ahead. This in my view is what we should really do to keep ahead of the game:

- Check with our local bookshops, to get their advance list of dates detailing forthcoming personality book signings, and put them in the diary.
- Check online for book signing dates and venues up and down the country. It may just be worth travelling a greater distance to attend a book signing if the author is a favourite.
- Check with the local library for secondhand books which they may be selling in one of their regular book sales. Many books found in a library sale are a bargain in their own right, but if you find one that has been hand-signed by the author, then you may have struck gold.
- Check online for secondhand books. There are many websites that feature secondhand books, and whilst most do recognise the value of an original signature, there are some

sites where the distinction is not always so clear and bargains can be found. One such website is Amazon.

I am an Amazon Market trader, and along with many other traders, I like to keep my book prices as low as possible to attract a quick sale. If I discover a signed book, I do have the option of listing it in the 'Collectable' section. However, if I do this it may take a while to sell, as many people consider books in this section to be 'expensive', often with good reason. If I have initially picked up my book for very little money, I am often happy to list it in one of the main categories where there are more browsers, and describe the book as 'copy signed by author'. I still get a good profit, but the buyer gets a bargain. I have many emails from grateful customers to vouch for this.

Many other Amazon Market sellers do exactly the same. So my tip is to scour the Amazon listings for secondhand books, and check the description to find mention of a signature. If you find one, like the author and the price, then buy it and grab yourself a bargain. The seller will then pack it up and post to you - *'signed, sealed and delivered'*.

Talk to you again in the New Year. Until then, may I wish you a very Merry Christmas and happy reading!

Richard

PS. Remember to visit my website: www.handybookmark.com for tips and hints on investing and caring for your books.