

Shot 1



The plot

After nerfing a German soldier off his bike by stringing a wire across the road, Hiltz (McQueen) nicks his uniform and bike and sets off...

Theshot

Despite our excitement and eagerness we almost failed before we'd started. One end of the key roads was closed due to road works, forcing us on a long detour to approach from Hopfen. Luckily, we could still get to the right spot with the white church in the background;



the road closure then worked in our favour by leaving it deserted and empty.

The trees in the foreground are now taller and bushier and the modern Armco (never mind the wet grass and road tyres - McQueen had knobbles) put paid to recreating Hiltz' 'hop' out of the field, but we could still blast off from the roadside like he did. After

adjusting helmet and collar, of course.

Where it is

The corner is on the outskirts of Hopfen, on the banks of the Hopfen See lake, on the ST2008 between Hopfen and Fussen. Looking north you should see the white Hopfen church in the background, as glimpsed in the film.



Shot 2



The plot

Hiltz rides into a small town packed with German soldiers and is called over by one of them. He rides over, pauses, kicks the soldier in the chest and rides off. The chase is on!

Theshot

Like McQueen, I'm just as wary of the Germans - but for different reasons. He was trying to escape; I was trying to look like a berk, in a Nazi uniform, in a German town full of people, in 2012. For all I knew it was a capital offence. Worse, the location is actually much



tighter and busier than expected. It's basically a T-junction in a pretty provincial town with a busy corner shop that attracts parked cars like doggy-dos attract bluebottles - all getting in the way of our re-enactment. If they'd only been WWII half-tracks and Wehrmacht instead of VW Golfs and grey-haired pensioners, we wouldn't have minded.

Where it is

At the crossroads of the 309 and 310 in Weissbach, north of Pfronten. Although the Basel/Ravensburg sign is a prop and there's no WWII soldiers or vehicles about, the house behind Hiltz' head and the building on the right (now re-painted and a shop) are clearly virtually unchanged.



Shot 3



The plot

After losing his pursuers in the countryside, Hiltz pauses by a wooden barn or hut and considers his options...

Theshot

This was clearly almost identical to how it was in 1962. In celebration, I rode the Bonnie round the meadow, bouncing and sliding as best I could - being Steve McQueen - grinning like an idiot. The Bonnie, knobbles or not, was cute, willing and eager, as they all are. And when it came to patting and kicking the hut wall for the pictures, a shiver went down my spine - my hands were touching *exactly* the same spot Steve McQueen's had all those years ago. Jeez, I'll never be able to look at this film the same way again...

Where it is

We hadn't been confident of finding this one. With only vague directions and knowing there were literally thousands of similar huts in this area, it could have been a needle in a haystack job. Instead it was one of the hallelujah



moments of the trip, first realising that the mountain horizon was identical to our reference picture and then finding the hut itself appearing before us on the side of the road like a vision. "You know," I said to Mykel. "This could be the one..." A quick check proved it was. Thrilled wasn't the half of it. We were like two excited schoolkids finding a virgin pack of fags in a layby.

By the way, it's on the OAL2 road between Zell and Pfronten about 3/4 mile north of the roundabout with the 310.

Shot 4



The plot

After discarding his German uniform, Hiltz heads on towards 'Switzerland', pausing atop a small mound...

Theshot

Now we were on a roll. It was happening. We'd 'get' it. Plus all the uniform shots were in the can, so I could relax as there was no more risk of jail.

From the hut to 'the hill' it was barely a mile - easy peasy. The hillock was now coated with long meadow grass rather than the shorter variety of 1962, but it was no problem, the identical mountain silhouette was unmistakable, as was Pfronten's beautiful St Nikolaus church in the background.

The old man mowing his perimeter viewed us pityingly. With an original photo in one hand and camera in the other, Mykel edged the bike and I into exact position. Then I assumed my best Steve McQueen pose...

Where it is

About a mile south of the 'hut' location on the west side of the OAL2, just entering the outskirts of Pfronten.

