

# The Times Crossword

## Book 3

### INTRODUCTION

Roy Dean's record for solving *The Times* crossword in 3 minutes 45 seconds is well-documented. It has been challenged, probably successfully, but never under stringent enough conditions to be ratified. What is less well-known is that there had been a glitch in the scheduling of the puzzle for Roy's early Saturday morning sprint. The one originally selected for the following Monday, since it was easier than usual, had been substituted, which gave him a following wind.

I once re-solved the previous day's rather easy puzzle on to a discarded blank copy, with a stop-watch to hand, glancing at each clue, and scribbling the remembered solution in immediately – it took me 3 minutes 20 seconds. Given that, I firmly believe that any claim (and one such has been made) to a sub-three-minute solving-time has to be attributable to a malfunction or misinterpretation of the timing system.

If I solve a *Times* crossword more quickly than usual, any excitement is tempered by a sense of let-down – it must have been too easy. If you fancy a sprint, this selection is not for you; it is a middle-distance book, and is intended to provide challenge without frustration, and to be accessible but not patronising.

These are *Times* crosswords, not “times” crosswords, so the statistics given regarding the puzzles used in the 1999 Times Crossword Championship should not be off-putting, but rather a hint of how the speediest solvers fared – and in one case, what happens when a lot of them spell the name of a well-known work of art wrongly.

*Times* crosswords are usually “plain” but the occasional wrinkle is not ruled out, provided it does not interfere with the normal solving of the puzzle. Weddings, for example, feature in two of the following puzzles – the first was published on my own wedding day, which 27 across will reveal took place in June. Later in the book, one of our senior compilers celebrates her 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and although the happy couple's names are in there somewhere, I was unaware of the occasion until studying the solution diagram.

She also took the trouble to make the puzzle pangrammatic, as are more than usual of the selection, which also includes two in which not only does the whole alphabet appear twice, but on at least one of those occasions in a cross-checked square. At the time, a solver wrote suggesting that this made the crossword “tripangrammatic”, in that each letter would appear in three different words of a list of the solutions.

As before, all the crosswords herein were originally edited by Brian Greer, and all bar a handful appeared in the last six months of the last millennium – if you're one year short of a century!

Mike Laws  
Crossword Editor of *The Times*

## FOR THOSE NEW TO THE TIMES CROSSWORD

Cryptic crossword compiling is a deceptive art. Humpty Dumpty in Lewis Carroll's 'Through the Looking-Glass' sums it up when he says, "When I use a word.... It means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less."

May I recommend, particularly to newcomers to the crossword, a simple approach taught me by my father, which is to study the solution and then examine the clue to work out how all the pieces came together to mean what the compiler chose them to mean! The method is particularly apt here because the solver is spared the agony of waiting for the next day's paper.

Here are a few sample clues to give you a flavour of what lies in store, followed by an appropriate introduction penned by my late father.

Grateful acknowledgment to Richard Browne, Crossword Editor of *The Times* whose work is included in the computer crosswords, together with that of *The Times* crossword team and former editors, Mike Laws, Brian Greer, John Grant, Edmund Akenhead, Jane Carton, Ronald Carton, and never to be forgotten our founding father, Adrian Bell.

Enjoy!

**David Akenhead, Author of the Computer Crosswords  
October 2007**

### SAMPLE CLUES

**Often does badly but gets decorated (9) FESTOONED**

Convention: anagram of "often does". Indicator: "badly"

**Unlike Dogberry's comparisons, not to be sniffed at (9) ODOURLESS**

Convention: antonym. In Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* "Comparisons are odorous". The opposite of odorous is odourless

**"Whist, brother", one need not say to him (8) TRAPPIST**

Convention: association – silent order of monks

**He may stop playing! (8) ORGANIST**

Convention: cryptic definition – obvious when understood

**But can these cakes sell like hot ones? (4) ICED**

Convention: conundrum (or riddle)

**Plain spoken guide (6) DIRECT**

Convention: double meaning or two meanings

**Policeman calls at the theatre (9) INSPECTOR**

Convention: dramatic assoc – refers Priestley's *The Inspector Calls*

**Telephone about the duck – dry and going bad (7) ROTTING**

Convention: envelope – O (duck) and TT (teetotal or dry) inside RING

**Champion golfer's casual request to caddie? (3,3,4) ANY OLD IRON**

Convention: familiar – iron as in scrap and iron as in golf; song of music hall comedian, Harry Champion

**Hair in distressing condition (5) TRESS**

Convention: hidden – disTRESSing

**Time and relative dimension in space vehicle. Who told you? (6) TARDIS**

Conventions: initials or acronym – refers Dr Who, fictional time traveller

**Last of the girls named as story-teller (8) TUSITALA**

Conventions: lit. and surgery – “last of the girls” reveals RLS, initials Robert Louis Stevenson, alias Tusitala, “story-teller” of the South Seas

**One might be the sum of two equal squares (9) RECTANGLE**

Conventions: logic or conundrum

**Artist's punishment of careless kittens (4) OPIE**

Conventions: nursery rhyme and word division – refers *Three Little Kittens* – “they shall have no pie” read O/PIE

**A drinking man upset about a heroine of opera (5) TOSCA**

Conventions: opera, word division, reversal – “A drinking man” is a sot, “upset” it becomes TOS plus C (about) plus A

**Even both ways (5) LEVEL**

Convention: palindrome – reads both ways (also double meaning)

**Jane is heard to offer a wider view (7) SEYMOUR**

Convention: pun or sound – Jane Seymour (third wife of Henry VIII) sounds like “see more”

**Roman dictator given total American backing (5) SULLA**

Convention: reversal – ALL US for “total American”. Indicator: “backing”

**Changed a hundred to six hundred (9) RECTIFIED**

Convention: Roman numerals – read instead AC to DC (alternating current to direct current)

**A bardic spelling of the last saint (8) CRISPIAN**

Shakespeare – in *Henry V* this is the Bard's spelling of the patron saint of shoemakers (last saint)

**He painted Miss Martin topless (4) ETTY**

Convention: surgery – the painter is BETTY minus B (All my eye and Betty Martin)

**Sad outcome of rent reduction (8) TEARDROP**

Convention: word division – TEAR/DROP read “rent reduction”

**Strain to find way about the ship (6) STRESS**

Convention: word division – ST (way) plus RE (about) plus SS (ship)

**Transport as is right and fitting by river (7) RAPTURE**

Convention: word division – R (right) plus APT (fitting) plus URE (river)

**Inset paragraph or it has a divisive effect (9) SEPARATOR**

Conventions: word div/envelope – SET plus PARA (inset – in set) plus OR

**The state of one had rejected love (5) IDAHO**

Conventions: word div/reversal – I (one) plus DAH (had, rejected) plus O (love)

**Maybe either state is unorthodox (9) HERETICAL**

Conventions: word div/anag – HERETI (anagram of “either”; indicator,

"maybe") plus CAL (state – California)

**Eating corn, perhaps, each appears to transgress (8) ENCROACH**

Conventions: envelope/anag – EACH envelopes (indicator, "eating") an anagram of CORN (indicator, "perhaps")

# Introduction to The Times crossword (and others of that ilk)

By Edmund Akenhead, Times Crossword Editor, 1965-83

The devices used by a cryptic crossword compiler are so many and varied that an introduction such as this can only give the beginner a glimpse of them. Experience will prove the best teacher, but I hope that the following tips will help the beginner in his or her first steps towards mastering 'The Times' (and similar) crosswords.

The best known device is the anagram. "Terribly angered" is a definition of the answer "enraged", which is also an anagram of "angered", the word "Terribly" being used in the clue as an anagram indicator. The solver should always be on the look-out for words suggesting arrangement, change, wrongness, confusion, strangeness and the like which may point to anagrams in the clue: "new" is sometimes used, also "sort" and "out" (in the sense of "wrong"), while "perhaps", "maybe", and "possibly" will probably indicate anagrams. Then there are words which have different meanings: "refuse" in a clue may appear to be a verb meaning "decline", but it may really mean the noun describing "rubbish": "tent" may mean not a canvas shelter, but a Spanish wine: "saw" or "gnome" may mean a maxim. Solving crosswords certainly helps to enlarge one's vocabulary. All sorts of words have hidden meanings in crosswords with "do" clued as a party, "letter" as a landlord, "number" as an anaesthetic (that which numbs) and so ad infinitum, the oldest chestnut being "flower" as a river, while "sewer" may mean a sempstress and "cover for a sewer" will mean not a manhole but a thimble, and "tour de France" is not a cycle race but the Eiffel Tower.

Many a crossword answer is made up of other words indicated by the clue. "Loudly disapprove royal skating display? Some reservations here (7-5)" is solved by joining up Boo-king off-ice, while Mild-red is well known as a girl with slightly communist sympathies. A word may consist of one word containing another (Envelope), and there are many other ways in which words (including abbreviations) may be combined either in their normal, or in anagrammatic or reversed forms to make the answer. In such "build-ups" the word "river" may refer to one of the

compiler's favourite British waterways - Dee, Exe, Fal or Ure (tributary of the Yorkshire Ouse).

Solvers should be familiar with many common abbreviations, such as e.g., i.e., the points of the compass N.S.E.W. (sometimes clued as bridge players), musical notes A to G (or doh, re, mi etc) and Roman numerals M, D, C, L, X, V, I. The clue "1,200 less 200 (10)" needs conversion into Roman numerals "MCC less CC" and anyone interested in cricket will know that the M in MCC stands for Marylebone. Chemical abbreviations for elements are sometimes used such as "au" (gold), "ag" (silver), "fe" (iron) etcetera. The letter L could be clued as money (pound sign), 50, lake, or as student, tyro, novice or learner (driver with L Plates. Solvers are also expected to know simple words in the more familiar foreign languages, particularly the articles, e.g. el (clued as "the Spanish), der ("the German") un ("a French") etc.

Finally, to mention four other types of clue: (a) Hidden answer clue "Something more in the next race (5)", here the answer EXTRA appears in consecutive letters in the clue (nEXT RAce"). (b) Surgery, which requires a certain amount of doctoring of words to produce the desired effect. Associated words like "beheaded", "curtailed", "reduced", often indicate this type of clue: "Humperdinck in turn to some extent a singer (6)" answer TREBLE is one of my favourites. Engelbert ("in turn") gives in reverse form TREBLEGNE and "to some extent" indicates a need for surgery or reduction. (c) "Sound" clues with sound-indicators such as "say", "we hear", "it's said", or "sound" telling the solver to look to the sound of the words used. "Some measure of spirit? I say! (5) gives the answer OPTIC (optic measures used in bars). "Say" in the clue tells the solver to look to the sound of "I", that is "eye" revealing an alternative meaning. (d) The acronym or word made up from the initial letters of other words. "Paddy as the normal agriculture initially here (5) PATNA.

An ounce of practical demonstration being worth a pound of theory I leave the rest up to you.

