

The Seventeenth Book of The Times Crosswords

FOREWORD

One collection of crossword puzzles looks much like another. Indeed, a recent correspondent says he was attempting puzzle number 19 in the fifteenth book of *The Times* Crosswords when he discovered he already had a copy and was doing the same puzzle again without knowing it.

I sometimes suspect gardening writers of recycling their work – “What to do with those azaleas” seems to come round every year – but I do not think we crossword compilers would often get away with it. Many of our readers have elephantine memories for clues, and crosswords do change imperceptibly over the years.

Indicators for anagrams, for instance, which nowadays include words as various as butcher, fudge, weaving and Ravel, are a far cry from the old (anag.). The number of quotations has diminished, and they will probably disappear altogether before long. Many solvers hold them to be unfair because one either knows them or one doesn't.

I also think, and certainly hope, that there is more light relief in our puzzles today. The staple cryptic crossword is inevitably the build-up, where the answer is split into separate building blocks which in turn may be anagrammatized, reversed, homophoned or whatever, and reassembled.

A puzzle wholly dependent on these verbal shifts can be dull, and my spirits always rise when I come across a cryptic clue whose solution depends on inspiration rather than perspiration, such as:

Mug presented at christening (4-4)

Entertaining ladies for kicks (6,5)

Although we seek to perplex, our prime aim is to amuse and I hope you will find cheerfulness permeating these puzzles. They are the work of twelve different hands, and appeared in *The Times* between October 1991 and March 1992.

John Grant

Crossword Editor of *The Times*

Answers: baby face, chorus girls

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. Englebert ("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.