

The Akenhead Years

Edmund Akenhead joined *The Times* as their Crossword Editor in September 1965 and he continued in that role with many innovations along the way until he retired in September 1983. He was instrumental, in particular, with the introduction of his new look crossword, inspired by the disciplines espoused by Ximenes, (alias Derrick MacNutt and erstwhile companion on *The Observer*) on the Art of the Crossword.

He produced a series of these crosswords for Frank Muir, a fellow crossword fan and Head of Light Entertainment at the BBC, between 1967 and 1968 for a Game Show hosted by Ned Sherrin between Frank and Patrick Campbell arguing for honours with various wits in attendance over a 9 month series entitled *Crossword on Two* for BBC 2, their new colour television channel.

Christmas 1970 saw Edmund's invention of *The Times Jumbo Crossword* a 27x27 effort which Eric Chalkley in *The Observer* described as a little masterpiece. This was shortly followed by *The Times National Crossword Championships* sponsored by *Cutty Sark Whisky* with a Grand Finale in London. It resumed, finding eventually a new home at The Cheltenham Annual Literary Festival. John Grant assumed the reins of this activity in 1986.

The Akenhead Years 1965 to 1985 reflect not only the time of his tenure as crossword Editor, and a little beyond in the case of the annual crossword championships, (lately suspended due to COVID, but hopefully to be revived soon), but also, increasingly over the years, a blend of father and son (yours truly) in some of his crosswords as well as his active participation in my own inventions – *The Times*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Sun* Computer Crosswords.

Sincerely, David Akenhead, former *Crossword Consultant to The Times*
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