

75 Years of The Times Crossword

Book Prefaces:

It is hard to believe that there was a time when The Times did not publish a crossword. When American newspapers in the 1920s adopted the new crossword craze, *The Times* steered clear presuming that Americans were spending five million hours a day in unprofitable trifling. However, *The Times* bowed to reader pressure and published its first crossword on 1st February 1930. Since then, of course, it has become a national and, indeed, global daily institution.

Here is a celebration of *The Times* crossword. There are 75 + crosswords - one from each year - showing the development of the puzzle along with its history, insights from famous solvers and numerous contributions from fans down the years. A foreword by Colin Dexter explains why Inspector Morse was such an addict and also reveals his favourite clues. Infuriating and satisfying by turns, *The Times* crossword is one of those national institutions that is, as Colin Dexter writes, 'a benchmark of mental acumen and flexibility'.

RICHARD BROWNE, a longstanding Times crossword compiler, has been editor of The Times crossword since 2002. An Oxford classics graduate and former IBM systems engineer, he believes English is the perfect toolkit for cryptic clues. 'Our nice short words allow you to say one thing and mean something else.'

Sir John Gielgud was an addict at the age of 84, 'I have found the crosswords a sovereign therapy during endless hours of waiting about while filming and doing television'.

Clement Attlee's attention span in meetings was questionable. 'Sometimes, his main interest in *The Times* was the crossword puzzle, which he unfailingly solved'.

Sir Winston Churchill was reported to be so obsessed with the crossword he frequently was in danger of missing cabinet meetings.

It is alleged that **Montagu James**, a former provost of Eton College, completed the crossword while his breakfast egg boiled - and he did not, it was added, like his egg hard-boiled.

INTRODUCTION by Richard Browne, Crossword Editor of *The Times*

The Times came a little late to the crossword party – our serial number will for ever be behind those of the Guardian and Daily Telegraph – but our reputation quickly made up for our junior status. What was it about those early puzzles that established us as the classic of our type? I think it was our particular combination of difficulty and erudition: the puzzles required a wide and deep range of cultural knowledge, suited to our readership of those days which typically graduated from governess to public school to Oxford and Cambridge; and the clues themselves were more allusive than specific, in particular giving little of the helpful wordplay we are used to today, so that solvers had to bear a number of possible answers in mind for many of the clues, which made it more crucial to know the quotations and other specific tests of knowledge that enabled them to put in the first cross-checking letters and thus begin the process of elimination.

It was Edmund Akenhead as editor who established the features we now expect of the modern puzzle: more precise and fairer construction of clues, with more wordplay and less reliance on mere recall of dusty school lessons. Today, a nodding acquaintance with Shakespeare and the Bible remains helpful, but we also may challenge the solver with the periodic table of elements, or the names of Walt Disney's seven dwarfs; but our anagrams and homophones are now all indicated (if deviously!), and every clue contains a scrupulous definition. But, as always, our compilers continue to strive to create those perfect clues, a feature of our crossword down the years, whose apparently effortless surface sense leads the solver teasingly but quite properly in entirely the wrong direction.

I would like to record my thanks to those many people who have contributed to this book: particularly to my predecessor John Grant, whose archives were a mine of material to Polly Tatum (née Carton) and Anthea Bell for their recollections of earlier days, to Paul King at *The Times* library, to Mark Holland at the Gales archive, to David Akenhead for proof editing, and to the many readers who wrote in with memories and anecdotes.

The Times crossword, however exasperating it may occasionally prove, clearly retains widespread affection, and long may it thrive.

Richard Browne, Editor of *The Times* crossword

75 Years of The Times Crossword

FOREWORD

by Colin Dexter

I feel honoured in being asked to pull together the fictional world of Inspector Morse – with his passion for *The Times* crossword – and the genuine affection that countless others, including me, feel for these puzzles.

Like the Greenwich pips and the British pubs, *The Times* crossword is a national institution, with the ability to solve it recognized as a benchmark of mental acumen and flexibility. All addicts are reasonably familiar with being asked how long it takes them to complete, and answers (where honest) vary enormously – from the under four minutes of Roy Dean, authenticated by *The Guinness Book of Records*, to Milton's timing of Satan's fall from heaven – 'from morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve'. I'm somewhere in the middle myself; but even after more than five decades of practice I not infrequently find myself infuriated at being unable to solve that one final clue. Morse could almost invariably complete the puzzle at supersonic speed; and 'Not now, Lewis!' was a common enough reprimand when his sergeant found the courage to interrupt him with some vital information on the latest murder. Once, to be fair to him, Morse did try to interest Lewis in the clue '*Take in bachelor? This could do well (3)*'. But without success.

What is its degree of difficulty? In the 'fiendish' category we have the former *Listener* puzzles, blessedly salvaged by *The Times* and printed each Saturday in the *Books* section. I will not dwell on it, since I usually have inordinate difficulty in understanding the rubric, let alone solving the puzzle. At the bottom of the range is the simple (!) definition-only coffee-break variety. This sort of thing: 1 ac. 'River (3)'; 'Fish (3)'. Well CAM/COD; DEE/DAB; EXE/EEL, etc. Who knows? And who cares? *The Times* maintains its traditional position in the upper-middle category, with the firm dedication of its setters to 'fair play', that is, saying what they mean in however oblique, misleading, but grammatically – and syntactically – correct formulation, always telling solvers what is to be done with words and letters, etc. For me such a faith in setters is of paramount importance,

since for ninety-nine per cent of the time I know they will ‘play fair’ with me; and therefore my greatest delight results from a struggle when the penny finally drops and suddenly the answer is simple and obvious – quite often memorable, too. It is in this last respect that such fine number-puzzles as Su Doku must ever sadly pale in comparison with the lure of the crossword, since their final impersonal answers are inevitably unmemorable – and indeed unmemorizable.

Recollection of favourite clues from the daily challenge is much more like greeting old friends anew, and even after many years such clues are so easily memorized. I once wrote to *The Times* crossword to say that I considered the following clue the finest offering of the previous two decades: ‘*For whom right and wrong can go in ledger (9,5)*’. Later I learned that Brian Greer was its author, and (pleasingly) that he has kept my letter. Fairly recently Mike Laws reminded us of the wonderful fourfold word-play in ‘*They tend to bring up unrelated issues (6,7)*’. I could go on and on ... Incidentally, a third former editor, John Grant, was the only person I ever met who had successfully spotted the clues to be found in the Morse novels which gave away the Chief Inspector’s first name.

A great, and I think, unique tribute for me personally was to have *The Times* crossword headed ‘Morse – Whodunnit’, in which members of the Morse team were to be found cleverly concealed in the completed grid. And as I look again at that particular puzzle I find a clue which for me epitomizes some of the key qualities I most admire: ‘*Queen’s favourite cheese (9)*’ – with its brevity, humour, deceptive wording, and the need for that bit of general knowledge.

Not that our crossword is without its faults, and I mention three minor grouses of my own. First, why this coy persistence with the anonymity of our setters? Almost all of us would be interested in their identities – or at least the names they’ve given themselves. Second, why not stick the puzzle where it belongs – on the back page? I felt much sympathy with one of the letters to the Editor protesting that they had never previously practised the skills of origami, and had no further wish to do so. Third, why not, occasionally, re-introduce the old-fashioned feature of printing a line of poetry with the clue’s answer omitted from it? Such clues give a sense of smug superiority (and an easy start!) to those familiar with the poem in question; and the opportunity for those who aren’t to do some research in the collected works and to find not only the relevant line but also many other wholly irrelevant delights into the bargain.

In sum, solving a crossword is for me the most civilized and enjoyable way I've yet discovered (though I'm only seventy-five) of wasting countless hours of my leisure time. In this foreword I have tried to suggest some of the reasons why this is so, and why Inspector Morse and myself became such devoted addicts of *The Times* crossword.

Answers to clues:

Take in bachelor, this could well do (3) – BRA

For whom right and wrong can go in ledger (9,5) – RECORDING ANGEL

They tend to bring up unrelated issues (6,7) – FOSTER PARENTS

Queen's favourite cheese (9) – LEICESTER

A VISIT FROM MI5 by David Akenhead

The Times crossword – Thursday, 20 October 1966

This crossword was submitted by my father, Edmund Akenhead, and appeared in *The Times* two days before George Blake was sprung from Wormwood Scrubs. George Blake had served five years of a 42-year sentence for spying for Russia and, at that time, this was the longest term for such an offence ever imposed in a British court. Blake, who had served with distinction in the Dutch resistance against the Nazi regime during World War II and later with SOE, was not without his sympathizers. The authorities subsequently paid my father a visit, suspecting him of signaling the breakout with cryptic messages in *The Times* crossword. They grilled him in his study for an entire morning, and I heard most of the interrogation. Walls have ears! It is true that there are a number of uncomfortable coincidences in this crossword in clues and solutions alike which appear to signal not only the intention (12 ac, 4 dn, and 14 dn) but also the location (27 ac) and the means (11 ac, and 1 ac); and with clues like 13 ac and with two references to the Scottish play (and ironically, George Blake did break a limb!) it is not surprising suspicions were aroused. My father was a magician who relished secrecy, yet on this occasion he was able to demonstrate that his puzzle had been submitted to the typesetters three weeks earlier, and he was absolved on these grounds. Yet, the whole incident remains a tantalizing mystery.

David Akenhead

Appended is the First *Times* crossword from Saturday, 1st February, 1930, compiled by Adrian Bell its founder and inspiration, which can be utilized with the AI technology available on Microsoft Windows 11 in conjunction with Microsoft Office to assist those hard of sight or hearing or as a stimulus for hospital patients or those at fitness centres or enterprises dependent on synchronizing body with mind; in the resolution of cryptic crosswords lies a valuable device in this respect which is designed to stimulate as well as entertain.

The key to the other puzzles with yearly samples thereafter are subsequently catalogued to 2006 with priceless recollections to endear and reflect on the national and priceless treasure that is *The Times* crossword today

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 Mike Laws and Brian Greer, former Crossword Editors of *The Times* whose work is also included in the computer crosswords, together with that of former compilers and editors, including Edmund Akenhead and John Grant who established *The Times* crossword archive to include the industry of Adrian Bell, founder of the *Times* crossword, and former editors Ronald and Jane Carton.

See the appended reproduction of both *The Times* and *Sunday Times* computer crosswords as originally announced on the final page of *The Times Crosswords Omnibus Book 2* published alongside the *Sunday Times* edition in 1996.

Enjoy!

David Akenhead, Digital *Times* crossword author and archivist
January 2024

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.

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Author: David Akenhead

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The Times Crossword, Saturday 1st

February 1930

ACROSS:

- 1 Spread unevenly (5)
- 4 Part of a Milton title (9)
- 10 A month, nothing more, in Ireland (4)
- 11 He won't settle down (5)
- 13 22 down should be this (3)
- 15 Cotton onto, so to speak (3)
- 17 Head of a chapter (4)
- 18 Denizen of the ultimate ditch (3-4)
- 21 Frequently under observation (7)
- 23 What's in this stands out (6)
- 25 Flighty word (4)
- 26 If the end of this gets in the way the whole may result (4)
- 27 "Retunes" (7)
- 30 This means study (3)
- 33 Simply enormous (7)
- 36 There's a lot in this voice (4)
- 38 This elephant has lost his head (4)
- 39 A turn for the worse (6)
- 41 Done with a coarse file (7)
- 43 "Red loam" (7)
- 45 This rodent's going back (4)
- 47 Makes a plaything with its past (3)
- 48 Wants confidence (9)
- 50 A mixed welcome means getting the bird (5)
- 51 This girl seems to be eating backwards (4)
- 52 The men in the moon (9)
- 53 A pinch of sand will make it dry (5)

DOWN:

- 2 Heraldic gold between mother and me (5)
- 3 Out of countenance (7)
- 4 Upset this value and get a sharp reproof (3)
- 5 Intently watched (4)
- 6 In some hands the things become trumpets (5)
- 7 A religious service (8)
- 8 This horseman has dropped an 'h' (6)
- 9 Sounds like a curious song (6)
- 12 This ought to be square (4)
- 14 Momentary stoppage (5)
- 16 Written briefly (4)
- 18 Calverley's picturesque scholars carved their names on every one (4)
- 19 Site of 45 across (4)
- 20 Precedes advantage (5)
- 22 Parents in a negative way (3)
- 24 Used to be somewhere in France (5)
- 28 Happen afterwards (5)
- 29 Climbing instinct in man (8)
- 31 A terrestrial glider (4)
- 32 The final crack (4)
- 33 The little devil's on our money (3)
- 34 Simplest creature (5)
- 35 Time measurements (4)
- 36 Jollier than 4 across (7)
- 37 Ladies in promising mood (6)
- 38 Presents are commonly this (6)
- 40 Gets the boot (4)
- 42 Hail in Scotland may mean tears (5)
- 44 Works, but usually plays (5)
- 46 She's dead (4)
- 49 Only a contortionist could do this on a chair (3)

The Times Crossword, Saturday 1st February 1930

Solutions

ACROSS:

- 1 SMEAR
- 4 PENSEROSO
- 10 MAYO
- 11 NOMAD
- 13 RESPECTED
- 15 SEW
- 17 DEAN
- 18 DIE-HARD
- 21 SUSPECT
- 23 RELIEF
- 25 SOAR
- 26 SKID
- 27 TUREENS
- 30 CON
- 33 IMMENSE
- 36 ALTO
- 38 UMBO
- 39 TURTLE
- 41 RASPING
- 43 EARLDOM
- 45 TARA
- 47 SEE
- 48 DIFFIDENT
- 50 EGRET
- 51 ENID
- 52 SELENITES
- 53 TOTAL

DOWN:

- 2 MAORI
- 3 ABASHED
- 4 PAR
- 5 EYED
- 6 NOSES
- 7 EVENSONG
- 8 OSTLER
- 9 ODDITY
- 12 DEAL
- 14 PAUSE
- 16 WRIT
- 18 DESK
- 19 ERIN
- 20 DEUCE
- 22 PAS
- 24 FRONT
- 28 ENSUE
- 29 AMBITION
- 31 SLED
- 32 DOOM
- 33 IMP
- 34 MONAD
- 35 ERAS
- 36 ALLEGRO
- 37 BRIDES
- 38 USEFUL
- 40 TREE
- 42 GREET
- 44 OPERA
- 46 ANNE
- 49 TIS

The Puzzles & Commentary...

The Times crossword – 1st February 1930

The very first Times crossword by Adrian Bell

The Times crossword – 26 October 1931

Prime Minister's triumph. Ramsay Macdonald's National Party gains everywhere.

The Times crossword – 14 April 1932

Cockcroft and Walton split the atom.

The Times crossword – 14 October 1933

Germany withdraws from the League of Nations.

The Times crossword – 6 July 1934

Fred Perry wins Wimbledon.

The Times crossword – 16 March 1935 Hitler introduces conscription.

The Times crossword – 11 December 1936

Edward VIII abdicates the throne.

The Times crossword – 28 May 1937

Neville Chamberlain becomes Prime Minister.

The Times crossword – 29 September 1938

Eleventh-hour peace move as four powers meet in Munich.

The Times crossword – 1 September 1939

Nazi Germany invades Poland

The Times crossword – 21 August 1940

Trotsky assassinated in Mexico City.

The Times crossword – 11 December 1941

US declares war on Germany.

The Times crossword – 1 January 1942

Declaration of U.N. signed by 26 countries.

The Times crossword – 2 February 1943

Germans surrender at Stalingrad

The Times crossword – 27 January 1944

Leningrad siege ends after 900 days.

The Times crossword – 1 May 1945

Hitler dead: Fuhrer 'has fallen at his command post'.

The Times crossword – 5 March 1946

Churchill declares an 'Iron Curtain' has fallen 'from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic'.

The Times crossword – 15 August 1947

India's first day of Independence.

The Times crossword – 14 May 1948

End of Palestine mandate: New State of Israel proclaimed.

The Times crossword – 4 April 1949

North Atlantic Treaty signed by 12 nations.

The Times crossword – 21 January 1950 George Orwell dies.

The Times crossword – 26 October 1951

Winston Churchill voted in as Prime Minister.

The Times crossword – 7 July 1952

London's last tram.

The Times crossword – 29 May 1953
Everest conquered: Hillary and Tenzing reach the summit.
The Times crossword – 3 April 1954
Oxford win 100th Boat Race.
The Times crossword – 9 May 1955
West Germany accepted into NATO.
The Times crossword – 26 July 1956
Nasser announces nationalization of Suez Canal.
The Times crossword – 10 January 1957
Harold MacMillan becomes Prime Minister.
The Times crossword – 4 January 1958
Explorer Edmund Hillary reaches South Pole.
The Times crossword – 1 January 1959
Rebel army drives out Cuban dictator Batista.
The Times crossword – 20 July 1960
Ceylon elects World's first woman P.M.
The Times crossword – 20 January 1961
John F. Kennedy sworn in as President.
The Times crossword – 26 April 1962
First US rocket lands on moon.
The Times crossword – 14 January 1963
French veto Britain's EEC bid.
The Times crossword – 12 June 1964
Nelson Mandela jailed for life.
The Times crossword – 18 June 1965
Bill introduced on drinking and driving.
The Times crossword – 20 October 1966
George Blake escapes from Wormwood Scrubs. See introductory article.
The Times crossword – 5 June 1967
Israel launches war on Arab States.
The Times crossword – 4 April 1968
Martin Luther King shot dead.
The Times crossword – 21 July 1969
America lands Man on the Moon.
The Times crossword – 22 January 1970
Heathrow welcomes first Jumbo Jet.
The Times crossword – 9 August 1971
Northern Ireland activates Internment Law.

This puzzle used at the Edinburgh regional final of the *Cutty Sark/Times* National Crossword Championship, was solved within 30 minutes by 6 out of 55 finalists.

The Times crossword – 16 February 1972
Miners' strike turns off the lights.
The Times crossword – 26 March 1973
Stock Exchange admits women for the first time.
The Times crossword – 17 June 1974
IRA bombs Parliament.

The Times crossword – 9 June 1975
First live broadcast of Parliament.
The Times crossword – 16 March 1976
Mr Callaghan likely successor after shock decision by Harold Wilson to resign.
The Times crossword – 16 August 1977
Rock and Roll ‘King’ Presley dies.

This puzzle used at the London B regional final of the *Cutty Sark/Times* National Crossword Championship, was solved within 30 minutes by 47 percent of the finalists.

The Times crossword – 25 July 1978
First test tube baby is born, a 5 lb, 12 oz girl.
The Times crossword – 13 November 1979
The Times resumes publication after year-long shutdown.
The Times crossword – 2 January 1980
Steel workers strike over pay.
The Times crossword – 29 July 1981
Charles and Diana marry.
The Times crossword – 29 May 1982
Pope makes historic visit to Canterbury.
The Times crossword – 17 January 1983
BBC wakes up to Morning TV.
The Times crossword – 14 February 1984
Olympic gold for Torvill and Dean.
The Times crossword – 13 July 1985
Live Aid makes millions for Africa.
The Times crossword – 27 January 1986
Seven dead in Space shuttle Challenger disaster.
The Times crossword – 19 October 1987
Black Monday Stock Market crisis.
The Times crossword – 3 December 1988
Egg industry fury over salmonella claim.
The Times crossword – 9 November 1989
Berlin Wall comes down.
The Times crossword – 31 March 1990
Huge anti-Poll Tax demonstration centred on Trafalgar Square.
The Times crossword – 17 January 1991
Bush orders Allies to begin bombing Baghdad.

This was the qualifying puzzle for the 1991 *Times Collins Dictionaries* Championship.
The Times crossword – 16 September 1992
Britain withdraws from E.R.M.

This tie-breaker puzzle was solved in 12 minutes at the 1992 Bristol regional final of the *Times Intercity Crossword* Championship.

The Times crossword – 2 January 1993
Warring factions discuss peace for Bosnia.

The Times crossword – 6 May 1994
Channel Tunnel opens.
The Times crossword – 19 April 1995
Many feared dead in Oklahoma bombing.
THE 1995 COMPETITION
1995 National Final
The Times Crossword – Puzzle no. 1
This puzzle was solved within 30 minutes by 95% of the contestants.
The Times Crossword – Puzzle no. 2
This puzzle was solved within 30 minutes by 81% of the contestants.
The Times Crossword – Puzzle no. 3
This puzzle was solved within 30 minutes by 86% of the contestants.
The Times Crossword – Puzzle no. 4
This puzzle was solved within 30 minutes by 95% of the contestants.
The Times crossword – 28 August 1996
Divorce between Prince Charles and Princess Diana is finalized.
The Times crossword – 2 May 1997
Labour routs Tories in historic Election.
The Times crossword – 10 April 1998
Good Friday Agreement is reached in Northern Ireland.
The Times crossword – 31 December 1999
Putin takes over as Yeltsin resigns.
The Times crossword – 4 August 2000
Queen Mother celebrates centenary.
The Times crossword – 21 February 2001
Ban follows Foot-and-Mouth outbreak.
The Times crossword – 14 January 2002
UK declared free of Foot-and-Mouth
The Times crossword – 1 January 2003
Euro hits streets of 15 countries.
The Times crossword – 11 March 2004
Madrid terrorist attack on trains.
The Times crossword – 31 October 2005
2005 Anniversary puzzle.
The Times crossword – 2006
Morse Whodunnit – 18 March 1993

In *The Wench is Dead*, this is how Inspector Morse begins a journey from Oxford:
'He bought *The Times* and *The Oxford Times* at the bookstall, got a seat at the rear of the train and had solved *The Times* crossword by Didcot. Except for one clue, ... He quickly wrote in a couple of bogus letters (in case any of his fellow-passengers were waiting to be impressed).

TIMES READERS' FAVOURITE CLUES from the last 75 years

1. What cooks do with books (5) RHYME
2. Perching birds don't when they do (4,3) DROP OFF
3. He represents one, and I another (8) ELEMENTS
4. Amundsen's forwarding address (4) MUSH
5. A rose-red city - it bombed (9) LANCASTER
6. Much-blessed dwarf (6) SNEEZY
7. Number three perhaps (5) ETHER
8. Is she got up to confound head and heart? (5) SIREN
9. Cold display unit for seafood (11) STANDOFFISH
10. Faith and character of Britten shown by his mass (8) BUDDHISM
11. Old historian understood modern power (7) TACITUS
12. Sex - it is awful? Get a life! (5) EXIST
13. Swan upping (10) BARDOLATRY
14. O for a deputy! (6,2,7) SECOND IN COMMAND
15. Terrible summer noted by Puccini (3,4,3) ONE FINE DAY
16. She takes a lot of trouble to compose her features (5,4) AGONY AUNT
17. Safe to sleep around? A boy always results (5,3) PETER PAN
18. Power to capture both rooks, giving brilliant mate (2,5) MR RIGHT
19. When depressed , one gives no impression of character (5,3) SPACE BAR
20. Pot of ale (4,5) BEER BELLY
21. Glance at the fixtures: not much on (8) SCANTIES
22. Wear a rather revealing top emerging from the waves (6) ARARAT
23. Very fine clues sold for a pound (9) CLOUDLESS
24. Blow me down! (9,5) DANDELION CLOCK
25. Fit in girl's pockets (15) MISAPPROPRIATES
26. Peter Pan (3,4) RUN DOWN
27. Performances that appealed to the gods but emptied the stalls (9) HECATOMBS

POEMS about *The Times* crossword

The most damning thing one can say about a crossword clue is that it could only be a crossword clue, because it reads so oddly. The art of the compiler is to make clues read logically, smoothly and innocently. Perhaps we succeed in *The Times*, for one of our solvers has been so struck by what she is pleased to call their lyrical language that she now turns them into verse. An example culled from the puzzle of April 1, 1989:

The war god has not backed Othello in battle

Tamed, perhaps and defeated

Die, we hear, as a result of scorched earth –

Funeral carriage about to arrive at the gate

(Specious order to sup with Belial).

Elena A. Dingle

From time to time she sends me new examples hot from the grid, begging me not to bother acknowledging 'because you must be busy turning carthorses into orchestras'.

John Grant, 1981

\$

Precocious solvers please take note, You're really beginning to get my goat.

I'll emulate Ximenes and Torquemada, And make the damn things very much harder.

An old hand like me knows all the tricks, My avian's archaeopteryx.

I'm trawling all the e-mail spam, To construct a fiendish anagram.

The vocab's got very much too simple; All the buffs are on to 'wimple'.

But all their wiles aren't a shred of use. You can't use words that are so abstruse.

The man on the Clapham omnibus, Would surely kick up quite a fuss.

John Blackburn

This poem by B.L Grave appeared in *The Times* on July 23, 1941, addressed to the Editor of *The Times* crossword

O nameless coiner of the cryptic clue,

O master of delusive definition

Embracing in your panoramic view

A world of miscellaneous erudition,

Once more I pay the homage due

To your wise conduct of your Inquisition,

Bringing a daily boon and breathing space

To the tired runners in a mad world's race.

You leave no fruitful avenues unexplored

That minister to innocent hilarity,

But never strike a harsh or jarring chord,

Or find a virtue in unveiled vulgarity.

Rumour and gossip are by you ignored;

You season ridicule with kindly charity,

Yet on occasion with unerring eyes

Transfix malicious folly as it flies.

You jog my memory with your mental jerks;

To you, in fine, I owe a double debt

For while the old machinery still works

And shows no sign of breaking down as yet –

Thanks to the stimulus of your quips and quirks –

You teach me to remember, and forget.

For Hell's most grisly gangsters have no power

To crash the gate that guards the Crossword hour.

75 Years of The Times Crossword

THE CULT OF THE CROSSWORD by Roy Dean - twice winner of

The Times Crossword Championship, 1970 and 1979, and world record holder since 1970 for the fastest verified solution of *The Times* crossword.

What is the world's favourite intellectual pastime - is it chess, bridge, mah jongg, backgammon, Scrabble? No, it's none of these - it's solving crossword puzzles.

The crossword puzzle is one of the most universally popular inventions of the twentieth century. In Britain alone, several million people enjoy their daily dose of puzzling. It's estimated that over 80 per cent of the world's daily newspapers carry some form of crossword, as well as many weekly newspapers and magazines.

The crossword appears to be a combination of the old acrostics and word squares which date back to ancient Greece. The first one was devised by Arthur Wynne, an English journalist working on the *New York Sunday World*. Looking to provide his readers with some entertainment, he composed a diamond-shaped grid with all the words interlocking and simple definition clues. He called it a 'Word-cross'.

But it wasn't until April 1924, with the publication of the first crossword puzzle book, that the craze took off. It immediately swept America and dominated social life. It got so bad that dictionaries had to be provided on trains so that commuters could do their puzzles.

A scornful editorial in *The Times* in December 1924 noted that 'All America had succumbed to the crossword puzzle ... The crossword is a menace because it is making devastating inroads on the working hours of every rank of society'. But two months later *The Times* had to admit that the craze had crossed the Atlantic with 'the speed of a meteorological depression'.

The Times itself held out for as long as it could, but in the end it bowed to public pressure and published its first crossword on 1st February 1930. It was one of the first daily papers to move away from the simple definition type of

clue and introduce the 'cryptic' puzzle in which each clue is a kind of riddle which has to be unravelled before the solver can arrive at the answer. Its diamond jubilee in 1990 was marked with great celebrations and worldwide coverage.

Though not the most difficult of its kind, its consistent qualities of sophisticated wordplay and sly humour have won it a reputation as the most famous crossword in the world. It frequently features in novels, plays and films where the author wished to establish a character of high intelligence. The annual *Times National Crossword Championship*, which began in 1970, attracted up to 30,000 entrants, and the final became a most exciting event as the keenest minds in the country worked through four puzzles against the clock.

Why should the cryptic crossword have developed only in Britain? One answer is the Englishman's fondness for wordplay. The 1920s were a period when the country house party was at its height, and it was customary for people to settle down to charades and pencil-and-paper games after dinner. Edward Powys Mathers, a critic, poet, and translator, picked up the tradition and translated it into the crossword, calling himself 'Torquemada' after the Grand Inquisitor.

Secondly, the English language has evolved over time as a melting-pot of words derived from many sources. In addition to the Romance and North European languages which form the basis of the English tongue, there are words brought back by Britons from the former colonies, infusions from Chinese and Russian, contributions from Turkish and Arabic. Greek provides the basis of political thought, science and technology, Latin for religion, medicine and the arts.

English has eagerly taken in everything. Consequently, the language contains many words with multiple meanings, deriving from completely different roots. Even short words like 'set' can have a hundred different meanings. And it is not uncommon for a single word like 'round' to serve as noun, verb, adverb, adjective and preposition. These ambiguities are seized upon by crafty crossword compilers who manipulate the language to their own ends to mislead the solver.

Thirdly, the English language is unique in possessing so many short words which can be used to make up longer ones to which they are in no way related. Take the word 'insignificant' for example. It breaks down neatly into 'in-sign-if - I- can't '. Or 'refrigerator', which becomes 'ref-rig-era-tor'. Tricks of this kind are the meat and drink of crossword compilers. With the most sophisticated practitioners of this form of literary fun, 'brainwash' may become 'bra-in-wash'

and clued as 'Bust down reason'.

Anagrams are no longer indicated by the symbol 'anag.' in brackets but by words in the clue suggesting confusion, error, drunkenness, building, possibility, and so on. Thus, 'The President saw nothing wrong' may be construed as 'Washington'. Taking this to its highest form, the whole clue becomes a definition of the answer, as in 'Thing called shaky illumination?', giving 'candlelight'.

Then there are many instances of one word slipped inside another to make a third, as in 'ca(bare)t', 'come(lines)s' and 'th(ink)ing'. Sometimes a word is hidden; for example, 'Prime Minister seen in the Athenaeum' gives 'Heath'.

Another popular device is words that sound alike: 'wether', 'weather' and 'whether' are typical of this kind. In some cases a foreign import can sound like an English word: the rubber substance 'gutta-percha' becomes the street urchin 'gutter-percher'. The crossword compiler has all these tricks up his sleeve, and many more. His tool is to use the English in its infinite flexibility, and he uses it to baffle the solver in a devious but entertaining fashion. So there is always a feeling of enormous satisfaction as you enter the final solution in a Times crossword.

PUBLIC REACTION TO THE TIMES CROSSWORD IN 1930

Thursday, January 16, 1930

Sir, I am interested to see that you are including a cross-word puzzle in your Weekly Edition. Would it not be an additional attraction to your many readers - of whom I am pleased to be one - if the same cross-word puzzle were reproduced on one day of the week in your daily edition? Perhaps you could find space in your columns to publish this letter, and thus ascertain the opinions of my fellow-readers.

Saturday, January 18, 1930

Many correspondents have written in response to the suggestion made in a letter last Thursday, that *The Times* should reproduce in one of its daily issues the cross-word puzzles published in its Weekly Edition. A few of the comments on the proposal are printed below:

Sir, We are two regular readers of The Times and cordially endorse Lieutenant-Commander Powell's suggestion to insert a crossword puzzle in your daily edition.

Sir, I hope that there will be a sufficient response to Commander Powell's letter asking for a weekly crossword in your daily edition to encourage you to carry out his suggestion.

Sir, As one who values *The Times* more than any other newspaper I should like to support the plea of Lieutenant-Commander A.C. Powell for at least an occasional crossword puzzle. I do so because in my household the desire for one was long since expressed. I hope that it will not be felt undignified to include this feature in England's leading newspaper.

Sir, Let me entreat you to keep *The Times* from puzzles of all sorts. Space there is precious and prestige also. Tuesday, January 21, 1930

Sir, I add a plea for the inclusion of a weekly cross-word in *The Times*. These puzzles, if the numbers and clues be clearly printed, bring interest and pleasure to many invalids. To many persons these clever puzzles are an enjoyment second only to the best programmes of the BBC.

Sir, A really clever cross-word puzzle, with well-thought-clues, is not an undignified thing, and I do not consider it would be derogatory for *The Times* to issue one. People are apt to place all cross-words in the same category and so judge hastily.

Sir, I beg you not to allow cross-word puzzles to creep into *The Times*. I am a young woman and do not dislike all innovations; but I hate to see a great newspaper pandering to the modern craze for passing the time in all kinds of stupid ways.

Sir, Do please keep out cross-word puzzles from your columns. There are plenty elsewhere for those who enjoy them. *The Times* occupies a unique position, and I'm sure thousands are jealous of its being associated for one moment with guessing contests.

Wednesday, January 22, 1930

Sir, I hope *The Times* will give us a good research cross-word puzzle every day. The idea of its being undignified is absurd. *The Times*, I have no doubt, will add to the dignity of crosswords.

Sir, Cross-word puzzles by all means and almost everywhere, say I, as a devotee and daily worker in that field. But not in *The Times*, surely!

A DAILY PUZZLE IN THE TIMES, 1930

The institution of a weekly crossword puzzle in *The Times* has brought a widespread demand from readers for a daily puzzle.

A new series will therefore be begun in *The Times* of Saturday, February 1, and will continue every day. The solution of each puzzle will be given in the issue following its publication.

SPECULATION ABOUT THE FIRST COMPILERS

There has always been conjecture about the identity of crossword compilers. Much curiosity was aroused about the first compiler and letters were regularly received at *The Times* guessing at his character.

'Who is he? According to the correspondence which comes into Printing House Square, he is a clergyman (possibly a canon), educated at Eton and Oxford, and a member of the Pickwick Club; he enjoys private theatricals, does not like gardening, and is a Boer War veteran. It appears that somewhere in this curriculum vitae, he has found some time for education at Winchester, to be admitted to the Bar, and become a member of the Royal Horticultural Society. He is reputed to live in London or the country; if the latter, then he has no knowledge of it.

WHO COMPILED THIS ONE, THEN?

Times crosswords never acknowledge their authorship, not even by way of pseudonyms used in other papers. Why is this? In the early days, it was merely following the general custom in the paper that nothing was attributed to an individual writer. Indeed, our first compiler, Adrian Bell, was expected to keep his authorship secret even from his own acquaintances. Nowadays, the names of our team are no secret - a group photograph captioned with all our names appeared in the paper in the spring of 2005. But we still do not identify the author of each day's puzzle. Partly this is the inertia of tradition; but there are some advantages. Some solvers may find over time that they prefer some compilers to others, so that they may not bother at all with the puzzle on some days, or on others start with a sinking feeling of inadequacy that makes what they expect to be a difficult puzzle even more so. With no such hints, solvers are encouraged to attempt every day's puzzle, and to do so without preconceptions. (Except perhaps the widely held idea, true once perhaps but no longer, that the puzzle is of a graded difficulty throughout the week, starting with an easy Monday and finishing with a fiendish Saturday).

A second point is that it is easier to edit an unnamed puzzle, because the compiler does not have to feel that something that is 'not his' is put under his name, and thus a much more consistent style and standard can be achieved in what is always 'The Times crossword', not an individual's crossword that happens to appear in *The Times*. Indeed, even seasoned solvers can be wildly wrong in attempting to pin authorship of any particular puzzle on to someone whose hand they think they recognize. Our team regularly debates whether we should join the majority and put a name to each puzzle; but so far we have always decided that the advantages of anonymity outweigh the disadvantages, so the puzzle remains for at least the foreseeable future, as it has been throughout its first seventy-five years, just *The Times* crossword.

Richard Browne, 2005

ADRIAN BELL - The first compiler of *The Times* crossword - 1930-1980

Birth of *The Times* Crossword Puzzle

I was commissioned to produce within a month six crossword puzzles of a type that should not affront the dignity of *The Times* readership, or belittle the presumably well-stocked mind of the literary heritage of our ruling class. But to unload daily a crossword puzzle upon, say, the Athenaeum Club, the Reform Club, the Carlton Club and all the august establishments of St James's, was too big a dare. My six puzzles were composed simply for *The Times* Weekly Edition, which went to all the outposts of the Empire around the globe. Thus, the reverberation of 'What! A crossword puzzle in *The Times*?' would filter slowly back home in muted shock waves - a sort of underground test, so to speak.

Adrian Bell, 1980

Bell was a prolific writer of books on English rural life and of character, gentle, modest and wise. One can see a nice capacity for lateral thinking in one of his books where he asks his wife, who is hanging over the marmalade pan, 'What happened to the wooden spoon the cat gave you for Christmas? Crossword compiling' he said, was 'the ideal job for a chap with a vacant mind sitting on a tractor harrowing clods or bicycling'. Most of his work seems to have been done on his bicycle in country lanes, with the chosen words for his next crossword propped up in the basket in front of him.

In his early puzzles he was plainly more concerned with familiarizing readers with the crossword idea than in being cryptic. But his ability to look at things in a new light soon became apparent: 'The cylinder is jammed (5,4) for example [SWISS ROLL]. And has anyone ever produced two neater clues than 'Die of cold (3,4)' and 'Spoils of War (4)' [ICE CUBE and MARS]?

John Grant, 1990

All that I can add is the memory of mother standing at the gas stove in Beccles, spoon in one hand stirring a saucepan and pencil in the other doing a crossword scheme; and Colin on his first visit to Beccles expressing an admiring interest in father's authorship of crosswords, to which father replied, 'A complete waste of time, dear boy'.

Sylvia Proudman, 2005, daughter of Adrian Bell, recounting the first time she introduced her future husband, Colin to her father.

RONALD CARTON - First Editor of The Times crossword 1930-1960

Reminiscences of Polly Tatum, Daughter of Ronald Carton

'Ubiquitous. What can I say about ubiquitous?' my father sighed.

'All over the place,' I suggested.

'That will do nicely,' he said and wrote my clue into his crossword puzzle. I was eleven and proud. My younger brother Geoffrey and I were gradually drawn into the world of clues and puns and alternative spellings, dictionaries, gazetteers, and quotations. My father's involvement with 'cwps' began in 1930 and lasted until his death thirty years later. My mother had always helped him and when he died she continued where he had left off. Literally, for she moved to his desk. Father always advised us not to get involved, but my brother did not heed the advice and, to this day he supplies a puzzle to another journal.

As often as not our parents and their books were not in the same place, indeed they were often on different floors of the house. We didn't always enjoy helping but it was good training in the use of reference books and they say that running up and down stairs keeps you fit. I have never weighed Webster's dictionary but I can assure you it is very heavy.

During the war the crosswords were composed in extraordinary and even funny circumstances. Father was a wit but as every stand-up comedian knows it isn't easy to be funny all the time. Whenever a bomb fell in our part of London mother had to get to the scene as fast as she could to take up point duty with the WVS. Sometimes she would be gone for several days at a time. So while she stood in smoking rubble in the Holloway Road organizing, informing, and comforting, father stood at the kitchen stove making our supper and composing clever crosswords with funny clues. How did he do it? Well, he had a reading audience of thousands and as an entertainer he couldn't let them down. I think it was more the spirit of show business that kept him going. More solemn people may call it duty. Call it what you will, it is the same spirit that enables an unhappy comedian to make you laugh, a tired athlete to finish the race, and even an editor to produce 600 words by morning when he's abed with the 'flu'. Every night at 5.25 father would telephone Printing House Square with the corrections for tomorrow's puzzle. I think he was only late once - he had difficulty making a telephone connection from Switzerland. His sense of duty was so strong that when he died we found that he had left a fortnight's supply of puzzles in his desk all ready for the printers.

THE TIMES OBITUARY: MR RONALD CARTON July 11th 1960

... The puzzles were produced in circumstances during the war that were sometimes ludicrous and sometimes near tragic. Carton himself, as well as editing the feature (no puzzle ever appeared that had not been subject to his scrutiny), contributed the bulk of the puzzles to *The Times*, and the credit for their large following, and the manifest pleasure they provide has been entirely his. His correspondence was large and varied and came from all over the world. It was not unusual to receive a letter complaining of the obscurity of a clue, to be followed a few hours later by a telegram from a repentant solver indicating that he had just seen the point and was laughing his head off.

But I shall always feel that his greatest achievement was the establishment of the Crossword Puzzle - much to the horror of some of the old gentlemen in the Pall Mall clubs who told the Editor very forcibly that *The Times* was going to the dogs. There was, for a time, some doubt as to whether the feature would be continued but it was providential that at that moment *The Times* tripped up with a clue that muddled up Casca with Cassius. The storm of shocked protests which reached the office persuaded the Editor that the Crossword Puzzle must go on.

During the Second World War, Carton worked in a government department on an anti-enemy propaganda, but somehow managed to contribute the bulk of the crosswords as well as edit them all. When the office started making cuts in the clues, on the grounds of the paper shortage, he was moved to protest that '... the clues of the crossword are written, with the greatest economy of words. That is what makes them bright and pungent. To cut down what is already succinct is to impair the general quality of the work.'

John Grant, 1990

THE FORTIES

A NEW KIND OF CROSSWORD: NIGHT THOUGHTS

The crossword puzzle printed on the next page is unusual (and hypothetical! Ed.). It is explained in the following extract from a private letter. In 1940, Sir Max Beerbohm wrote to *The Times*: 'No doubt you, like most people, have sometimes thought of some utterly awful thing that you could do if you chose to, some disastrous and devastating thing the very thought of which has brought cold sweat to your brow? And you may have at some time thought:

"Suppose I released into the columns of *The Times*, one of these fine days, a crossword puzzle with clues signifying nothing whatsoever," and may have hideously pictured to yourself the effect on all educated parts of Britain?

'You may incidentally have seen yourself going into your club shortly before luncheon time and observing in the armchairs men with blank, set, fixed, pale, not-just-despairing faces, poring over the current issue? - one of them perhaps rising unsteadily and lumbering out of the library and asking the librarian, "Have we a Wordsworth concordance?", or some question of that sort ...

'And you may further have wondered just how the apology in the next day's issue should be worded - just what excuse should be offered, before the shutters in Printing House Square were briskly and slamingly put up for ever? Perhaps I oughtn't to remind you of this nightmare of yours. Forgive me.'

'PS: The nightmare wouldn't be loathsomely complete unless a few of the clues were genuine - and very simple, so as to put the solvers in good heart, and make them confident of success, and keep their shoulders to the wheel. I have provided six such clues with my usual forethought.'

Note: Out of consideration for our solvers, *The Times* printed Beerbohm's letter alongside his crossword. Some of his clues read more like crossword clues than the real thing, and his quotations would not have disgraced their putative authors.

THE FIFTIES

JANE CARTON - Editor of The Times crossword 1960-1965

On Carton's death in 1960 his wife, Jane, who had been contributing puzzles and helping with the editing for some years, took over. She had a pretty turn of wit - 'The greater snowdrop (9)' and 'Foreign entanglements (9)' [AVALANCHE and SPAGHETTI] - but her chief concern was always to check every possible fact; one must be certain that the solver could not write and say, 'I think this is unfair'.

John Grant, 1990

THE SIXTIES

My task was greatly alleviated by the numerous contributions from those experts in their craft, Adrian Bell and my predecessor, Jane Carton, who had taken over the editorship from her husband on his death in 1960 and who gave me constant advice and assistance until her own sad death in 1971. If the reputation of The Times crossword has been maintained since the death of Ronald Carton, this is due to a very great extent to Jane Carton and her devotion to the task of producing the best possible crosswords and of passing on to her neophyte successor the traditions so long created and developed by her husband and herself.

Edmund Akenhead, 1985

EDMUND AKENHEAD Editor of The Times crossword 1965-1983

Progression of *The Times* crossword

The tendency, as I see it, has been towards getting more into the clues and to increase the proportion of 'double clues'. Not every clue provides two routes to the answer, the quotation clue (once much commoner in Times crosswords than it is today) being one with only one route, but there are today many more 'build-up' clues than there were in the early days, pointing not only to the meaning of the word but showing how the word can be constructed. The devices used as bricks in this building-up process have tended to multiply and the patient solver is expected to know that 'direction', 'point' or 'quarter' in a clue is likely to indicate N, E, S or W, and 'note' can mean any letter from A to G or perhaps a note in the tonic sol-fa (do, re, me, etc.) Solvers are also expected to know the chemical abbreviations

used for some of the better-known elements, such as Ag for silver, Fe for iron, and Cu for copper, and to have knowledge of the definite and indefinite articles and other very simple words in French, German, Italian and Spanish (even Russian entered into a clue for OUIDA in the 1978 Championship Final).

A simple word like 'it' in a clue could mean 'Italian' (vermouth) or SA (sex appeal) or vice versa, while 'of course' could mean 'naturally' or it could refer to golf-course, a race-track, a series of lectures or part of a meal. There are innumerable tricks of the trade which solvers will learn with experience. In particular, a solver must know the Roman numerals, with 'many' often meaning L, C, D or M; and must be prepared to translate a clue into Roman numerals, such as the clue '1,000 in 1,200' for 'Marylebone' which, as every cricketer knows, is the 'M' in 'MCC'.

Edmund Akenhead, 1980

I am sorry if the more gifted solvers find the crossword too easy, but there has been no attempt to make it easier than it was, and it is thought that to make the puzzle noticeably harder would frustrate more solvers than it would please. It is easy enough to concoct really difficult clues but those who hunger after these will have to wait for the Eliminator Puzzle. If nevertheless a reader remains baffled by a clue in an ordinary Times crossword and writes to me with a stamped addressed envelope for reply I shall always be glad to send the explanation.

Edmund Akenhead, 1983

The style of the crossword today owes much to Edmund Akenhead, who took over as editor from Jane Carton in 1965. As a life-long member of the Magic Circle, he felt that the cryptic crossword compiler has much in common with the conjurer, since it is his constant aim to misdirect the solver by mental sleight of hand. He was involved in two major developments, The Times Crossword Championship and the Jumbo Puzzle, which he invented. The Jumbo puzzles, which Akenhead started in The Times in 1970, were well described on the occasion of Akenhead's retirement in 1983 by Roy Dean, the retired diplomat who won the first Times Championship: 'What elephantine elegance, what breadth of erudition, what excitement, as the solver is led on from Shakespeare to Shaw, from the Bible to Brewer, from Ancient Greece to modern science, until the onset of writer's cramp forces the pen from his fingers. How fitting that the name of Akenhead can be clued as "A knowledge master"' (et in memoriam suam Ed.).

John Grant, 1990

Letter to Edmund Akenhead as Editor of The Times crossword, 1967

Dear Editor, In 1963 I moved to Westcliff-on-Sea in Essex in order to join the staff of Westcliff High School for Boys. In those days staff did have time for recreation, during the morning break and the lunch-hour. Some played shove-halfpenny, others, including myself, did *The Times* crossword. The 'star' solver was Alfred Bately, the Head of Maths, who had been at the school since 1928. He filled in the answers and allowed the rest of us to make an occasional contribution.

In July 1967 Alfred was due to retire. One of colleagues wrote to the Crossword Editor of The Times to ask if it would be possible to include in the crossword of the day of his departure an appropriate clue. The reply came back that the crossword was certainly not the place for passing on personal messages!

On the last day of the Summer Term - probably about July 21st - before Alfred appeared, some of us started doing the crossword. If I remember rightly, One Across produced the answer Good-bye Mr Chips and I think another answer was Alfred. It rapidly became clear to us that the Crossword Editor was not as stony-hearted as his letter had led us to believe. A virgin copy of *The Times* was retrieved from the school library and it was left to Alfred to decode the messages. His delight was immense and, of course, that copy of The Times left with him.

Yours sincerely,

John D. Hart

THE SEVENTIES

EXTRACTS FROM JOHN GRANT'S SCRAPBOOK Editor of *The Times* crossword
1983- 1995

There are three things that are vital to *The Times* - the letters, the obituaries and the crosswords. People get absolutely hooked on the crosswords. It's rather a sort of British thing, the most famous of its kind in the world. There is always the desire in this country for the witty, urbane, almost gentle art of diversion - for the gifted amateur, not the professional.

The solver must, above all, be entertained. It is not our aim to show how clever we are and provide puzzles that nobody can solve.

Gathering Round the Tribal Totem

The first thing one realizes about this club is that some member, somewhere, will always know more than the crossword compiler or editor. 'Revolutionary leader, such as William II' (answer: REDHEAD) seemed harmless until a member pointed out that William's nickname Rufus derived from his ruddy complexion and not from the colour of his hair (as the DNB confirms).

Famous Solvers

Perhaps the greatest pleasure of my editorship was the relationship with our solvers, who were always polite and friendly. One such was Sir John Gielgud, who wrote to me a dozen years ago: 'It is true I am a crossword addict whose efforts were strenuously begun in 1944, when one of the electricians at the Haymarket staggered me with his crossword expertise. He could also follow a cue-sheet by the lines in a Shakespearean play without referring to numbers - after a long familiarity with seasons when he had worked at the Old Vic. Since that time I have found the crossword a sovereign therapy during endless hours of waiting while filming and doing television.'

Handing over the Mantle

But tomorrow's puzzle is by my successor as Editor of The Times crossword, Brian Greer. I probably won't be able to solve it, because compilers are not generally good solvers, rather as composers of end-game problems sometimes do not even play chess. Indeed, I remember my predecessor, Edmund Akenhead, at a Times Crossword Championship after his retirement, solving one of the puzzles in 23 minutes, which was widely acclaimed until it turned out to be one of his own.

(Still quite an achievement given the fact that this was my father's final appearance at the Championships since his health and powers of retention were fading rapidly, and on the subject of chess in which he was highly proficient, he still managed to beat me in a five hour marathon, days before he died, running on empty!- David Akenhead).

THE EIGHTIES

LETTERS

Sir, On a recent visit to Egypt a friend purchased a copy of *The Times* for £E 2.50 (approximately £1.25) and was delighted to find that the crossword had been accurately completed.

I have tried asking my supplier what he will charge for this remarkable service, and other readers might also be interested if you could provide details of how it can be arranged.

Mr John Ruffle, 1987

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This tongue-in-cheek suggestion became reality some years later with the offer of a premium-rate phone line to provide exactly this service in 1987.

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Sir, If your correspondent leaves his copy of *The Times* on the train for others to read then that is an act of charity. If he leaves some other newspaper he is a litter lout.

If, however, he leaves his copy of *The Times* with the crossword completed then he may be suspected of being a show-off.

Mr J. Bunting, 1988

THE TIMES CROSSWORD CHAMPIONSHIP by Richard Browne 2005

The Crossword Championship started in 1970 and ran regularly until 2000. Potential entrants completed a qualifying puzzle published in the paper at the beginning of the year, which was of the normal standard; and a correct entry entitled them to attend the regional final of their choice - there were generally six of these, in hotels in cities around the country, held over a series of weekends through the summer. London, even with two finals, always had more applicants than could be accommodated, so they had to face the fearsome Eliminator puzzle, published in the paper during February and so difficult that normally even entries that had several answers blank or wrong still qualified. Some Londoners used to avoid the Eliminator altogether by applying to other centres, even Glasgow.

At each final, contestants were presented with four puzzles to solve, with half an hour

for each. Many contestants simply enjoyed the chance to meet people who shared their interest in crosswords, and to meet the Crossword Editor (who attended in the role of umpire) and the occasional compilers who dared to show their faces; but for serious competitors it was a race against the clock: bonus points were awarded, one for each minute under thirty that a puzzle was finished, and there were always a good number of people with all-correct solutions, so that the winners were invariably decided on bonus points. Each minute as it passed was marked off on a slide projected on the wall, and a well-drilled team from a local school patrolled the aisles, responding to a competitor's raised hand clutching the completed puzzle by hastening to their place to collect the entry and mark the time on to it. Behind the scenes, another team worked accurately at great speed to mark the answers and transfer the scores to a results grid.

A tea interval was taken after the third puzzle; the results to date were then posted on the walls, so that everyone could see how they were doing, and the front runners knew how much time they could afford over the final puzzle. The last puzzle was marked equally speedily and the winners were announced as soon as the final thirty minutes were up. Generally three or four qualifiers were allowed from each of the regional finals, so that the national final had around two dozen contestants, including usually the reigning champion who was given a bye to the following year's final.

In 1995, the winner was Dr Helen Ougham, a scientist from Wales. Helen started solving crosswords in her teens, and was soon enjoying both *The Times* and harder crosswords, such as *The Listener*. She entered the competition first as an undergraduate, just for the fun of it and to meet other solvers; but then life and work took over, and she did not return to the competition for some years. She won the Birmingham final in 1989, and qualified for the national final again in 1991, in which she came fifth. But she approached the Birmingham competition in 1995 with no particular expectation, and remembers little of it, except that she found the puzzle the present editor compiled gratifyingly easy! She finished in third place, which qualified her once more for the national final, along with a stiff field of 21 containing five other previous champions and twelve other previous national finalists.

So to the Hyatt Carlton Hotel in Cadogan Place on Saturday 30th September for the final. Helen recalls: 'My newly acquired partner and I had to leave home at a quarter to five for the train journey to London. My mother also came up from Kent, and this was their first meeting. I think it was more stressful for them than for me; by the end of the last puzzle, they had their arms around each other, eyes shut, and couldn't bear to wait for the result! I knew as I finished the fourth puzzle that I must be somewhere in contention, but it wasn't until the organiser, Mike Rich, came up and whispered that he thought I had a good chance of winning that I started to think about the short speech I might have to make if I did. I must have said something, although it all passed in a blur'.

It was a tight finish: although Helen solved the four difficult puzzles in an average of 11 minutes each - one of them in just six - in a nerve-racking finale she beat Michael

Macdonald-Cooper (a previous champion, and later to be the crossword editor of *The Independent*) by a mere half a minute, with the defending champion, William Pilkington (chief budget officer of the then Cleveland County Council) just a further half-minute behind.

Helen says: 'That year there was no sponsor, so I didn't win a gallon of whisky or a year's first-class rail travel; but I received a beautiful glass punch-bowl, which is still on my mantelpiece, and I was glad my partner was there to help carry it back on the train to Aberystwyth!'

Did winning make a difference to her life? 'Not in the least. I went back to work, which started to involve me in a certain amount of travel. Although these pressures meant I could not always take part in the final, I returned in 1996 to defend my title, though with conspicuous lack of success that time. I did get asked to go on *Countdown*, though - but I never did.'

THE NINETIES AND BEYOND

PUBLIC REACTIONS TO THE CROSSWORD CHAMPIONSHIP

Crossword SOS

Sir, My psychiatrist agrees that if you occasionally fibbed to note that, say, '99 per cent of the competitors at the Bristol/London/Edinburgh regional finals of *The Times* Knockando Crossword Championship took all day to solve just several of the above 30-odd clues', it would benefit me greatly.

Mr W. Sanderson

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Puzzling it out

Once again I note that a considerable proportion of contestants solved one of your crossword puzzles within 30 minutes. May I say that I should be most disappointed if anything like this happened to me.

Surrounded by dictionary, thesaurus, and numerous reference books, my average is about two hours, during which despair is one of the usual phrases, and sometimes I don't even finish, though it is surprising how the solving rate improves once the television has been turned off.

Mr R.M. Ward

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Sir, I was horrified to read that Mr Ward uses dictionaries et al in solving the crossword, since I was brought up to believe that 'looking-up' was at best an admission of defeat and, at worst, downright cheating.

Surely the whole purpose of education is to enable one to complete *The Times* crossword unaided?

Mr David Vince

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Sir, Surely Mr D. Vince has got it wrong? It is precisely the research into 'dictionaries et al' which furthers education and gives purpose to the completion of *The Times* crossword.

Mr John Bloch

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Sir, I will give up reference books when I can be assured the compiler has not used them.

Mr J.G. Edwards

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Sir, Well done the 51 per cent of competitors who completed the Manchester Regional Final of *The Times* Aberlour Crossword Championship within 30 minutes. In my home the crossword was completed by 100 per cent of the entrants in six hours. I was the sole entrant.

Please confirm that the same conditions applied for the finalists as myself: two impromptu breaks to converse with double-glazing salesmen; brief discussion with Jehovah's Witnesses; exchange of pleasantries (and cash) with a charity collector; break to prepare and cook dinner; chauffeur duties for children to various venues; and momentary panic when I thought the ding dong of the bell meant it was all over but no, it was a lady selling cosmetics.

Given these circumstances, didn't we do well!

Mrs G.M. Watt

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Sir, In the summer of 1999, I went to London to compete in the final of The Times Crossword Competition. I had little expectation of success, and lived up to that expectation by failing to complete any of the four puzzles in the allotted time.

After the final, I bumped into an acquaintance of mine from work, John Grimshaw - I am a Royal Air Force officer and John works for the Ministry of Defence. John is a regular compiler of *The Times* and *Listener* crosswords, and he, together with the late Mike Rich, was organizing the event. I had nothing particular planned for the afternoon and I thought it would be interesting to stay, in any case, to watch the grand final, so I offered to help with setting up. John duly accepted, so I spent a couple of hours moving chairs and tables around and shuffling pieces of paper.

I thought little more about my minor role in that year's Times Crossword Competition, until a couple of months later I received a phone call from John. He suggested that I would be very interested in the following Saturday's crossword. Intrigued, I rushed out on Saturday to buy my copy of *The Times*. As I solved the clues, I was surprised and delighted to discover a hidden message. Four of the answers in order gave:
SQUADRON LEADER, PETER, FLIPPANT, THANKS.

Peter Flippant, Wing Commander

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Sir, I vividly remember, when I was a child, my father revealing on his return from his daily commute to London on the train: 'Ah, it was a tough one today, took me between Barming and Swanley to complete.'

Fran Williams, 2003

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The Times crossword wrecked

Sir, Here's one on behalf of the compilers, and my one claim to fame: I'm the only man to wreck the acclaimed *Times* crossword puzzle.

It would be some 15 years ago when John Grant, the then crossword editor, phoned to say that one of my puzzles would be appearing the following day, Easter Monday.

I duly turned to the back page - and choked on my cornflakes. The clues and the grid did not match! The shame! The ignominy! Fortunately my wife prevented me from cutting my wrists, because later that day John rang to say that it was not my fault - the printers had inserted the wrong grid.

The outcome was interesting. If memory serves me aright John received some 50 letters. Forty were outraged that a paper of the calibre of *The Times* should be guilty of such carelessness; five said they had solved the puzzle anyway by making a grid to fit the clues; and five said, somewhat sarcastically perhaps, what a splendid idea, you should repeat this type of challenge from time to time.

Bob Bartholomew, 2005

NEW CLUES FOR OLD by Philip Howard, 1990

One way of looking at the world, personified by Kingsley Amis, is that every day, in every way, things are getting worse and worse. This is even less true than its converse, associated with Emile Coué, that every day in every way, things are getting better and better. If challenged by a pessimist for an example of something that has improved during our lifetimes, offer him *The Times* crossword.

Those primitive crosswords of 60 years ago were not entirely 'Anagram, 7 letters' plain-sailing. The first one included clues that are early cryptics: 'A month, nothing more, in Ireland (4)' - answer 'MAY-O'. But for cyptographic cunning, elegance, and wit, today's crossword are to yesteryear's as Hyperion to a satyr.

You could call one type of clue that has come in recently the Chimera clue, with a lion's head, an allusion's tail, and an anagram's body: that is, a clue that is part anagram, and part something else. For example: 'Writ from man Maud's twisted (7)' means Man + twist (i.e. an anagram of) Maud's = Mandamus (a writ from a superior court). The other new type of clue is the '&lit', that is to say an anagram + a literal description of the solution in the words of the anagram. This is the crème de la crème. For example: 'One red man possible (7)' = an anagram of I (Roman numeral) red man = AMERIND. 'Involved [anagram hint] in my trio, one is this (8)' = anagram of 'in my trio' = MINORITY.

Crossworders are amateur cryptographers, code-breakers - and spies. As it was said in the anxious months leading to D-Day an alarming number of code names used for the Normandy landings, such as Omaha and Utah, cropped up in crossword solutions. Paranoid puzzlers in the War Office suspected there was a Nazi spy lurking in the basement of Printing House Square sending cryptic messages to Berlin. (Curiously enough there undoubtedly was, as I have uncovered in my labours as archivist! – DA)

Over the years the lex of *The Times* crossword has become more unbuttoned and informal, as has the language in other less specialized registers. Every day you find slang, racy words and double entendres that would not have been passed even 10 years ago. For example Bimbo, Bananas, or Bats signifying (hint hint) Mad.

However, much of the idiolect of the setters of *The Times* Crosswords remains charmingly old-fashioned. A moll and a good-looker are quaint old male chauvinist gent's clues that point us towards a woman. The books that we are supposed to have read are still the reading-list of a Thirties English public school: the Bible (Authorized Version, natch) and Prayer Book, Shakespeare (particularly Hamlet), Dickens, Lewis Carroll (especially the three little girls in the well), Gilbert and Sullivan. As the times move on, we are expected to have read Evelyn Waugh (with particular reference to Scoop) and there has even been a clue from James Joyce, though this enraged some punters.

CROSSWORDS: ON A POINTLESS RITUAL by Matthew Parris, 1990

I am almost sure I am not from this planet.

It would be no surprise now if a great hand were to come down from the sky and scoop me up from where I stand (at the Underground station, staring at the escalator that has been broken for weeks yet nobody is fixing) and a great voice were to say 'Okay, Matthew, your testing time is over. You were right. They are all mad. But you are not one of them. You never were. Come and have a cup of tea and we'll explain the whole thing.' And I would be led away. I have been expecting this since I was a toddler. And the first thing I would want to ask is about crosswords.

In our pages opposite there has been a protracted correspondence going on, again, about these stupid things. I have never done a crossword in my life and I hope to die in the same condition. Why in heaven's name one man should want to spend his time guessing which letters 'go' in the little boxes devised by another man beats me. If they have so much spare time and need an intellectual challenge, why don't they learn how escalators work, then tell London Regional Transport?

Riddles, games and rituals. Yuk! I suppose *The Times* crossword is really a triumphant and a classy amalgam of all three. It is, they say, a sort of mental exercise. The intellectual equivalent of a caged hamster's exercise wheel.

But my friends, the cage door is open!

THE GREATEST SOLVER: John Sykes 1929-1993

I was saddened to read the news of John Sykes' death in *The Times* last week. Like many of you, I had the greatest admiration for his linguistic prowess and speed of thought, which led him to ten victories in these annual championships.

At times we amateurs might have grumbled about having to pit our puny wits against a professional lexicographer - and there was no doubt that what he himself called a 'marginal advantage' put him head and shoulders above the rest of us.

I am reminded of the description of Julius Caesar that Shakespeare almost wrote;

Why man, he doth bestride the chequered grid

Like a colossus, and we petty men

Wilt under his huge brain, and peep about

To find ourselves perpetual runners-up.

I'm sure that we fellow competitors approached the finals with some trepidation. You might even say, in modern parlance, we were 'Syked out'. At the top of his form John was unstoppable. In 1974 he completed the four puzzles in 29 minutes with a record margin of 12 minutes over his nearest rival. This means that he would have solved five puzzles in the time it took us to do four.

Unlike mine, his mental powers did not seem to deteriorate with age. In the 1989 final he averaged 7 minutes per puzzle, and at his last appearance in 1990 his average time was eight minutes. It was a tragedy that ill health prevented him from continuing.

John was essentially a *Times* crossword man. He didn't care for the *Listener* or *Azed* puzzles, which he found 'too convoluted'. But strangely enough he wasn't a *Times* reader. So how did he perfect his expertise on the crossword? Well, it was reported that a friend used to give him a weekly batch of puzzles, and that he sat down and solved them all at once. He had hit on the ideal training for these exacting competitions.

Roy Dean 1993

Doctor who puts one across (4,5)

His technique was to start at 1 Across and then go to 1 Down, proceeding to the clues for which he had an initial letter wherever possible. One of his tricks was to give priority to solving the Down clues. I believe that setters usually start with the Across clues. They put some of their best subtleties into them, when their minds are fresh. By the time they have got to the Down clues, some of their subtlety will have been exhausted. They are usually easier.

John Grant, 1986

Fellow competitors' admiration Whenever John Sykes turned up at the venue for the regional final I was attending, I always felt comfortable being completely thrashed at solving the crosswords by him. He seemed to prove the theory that there were aliens among us.

Don Henderson

THE TIMES OBITUARY: JOHN SYKES 7th September 1993

The son of a borough treasurer, John Sykes was one of the cleverest men of his generation. His life can be divided into three major segments and one spectacular hobby. Starting out as a theoretical physicist, he became an inspired translator and progressed from there to being an expert lexicographer all the time maintaining his form as the most redoubtable competitor in *The Times* National Crossword Championship

From St Lawrence College, Ramsgate, John Bradbury Sykes went up to Wadham College, Oxford, to read mathematics, and having taken his first degree, went on to write a DPhil thesis on aspects of theoretical solar physics. In 1953 he moved to the Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell, where he did some work on neutron migration. The authorities soon discovered that his real interest lay in another direction, namely translation. His phenomenal memory enabled him to acquire an outline knowledge of any language remarkably quickly (at the time of his death he had just added Welsh to his collection). The essence of his aptitude was speed: as an undergraduate he once went home for two weeks at Christmas and returned to Oxford able to translate Russian scientific papers.

In 1958 he was appointed head of the translations office at Harwell, a post which he held, to begin with, virtually single-handed. He was required to translate documents of many kinds from several languages, especially German, Russian, but also Spanish, Japanese, and so on.

Around 1970 he discovered a new intellectual challenge. He noticed that the editor of the Supplement to the OED was appealing for earlier printed evidence for a large number of modern words, among which was the astronomical term, 'absolute magnitude'. The hunt excited him and he was soon working in the OED department unpaid on Saturday mornings. It was not long before his obvious linguistic skills impressed the Oxford University Press to the extent that he left Harwell to become editor of the Concise Oxford Dictionary when the post fell vacant in 1971. This household dictionary had fallen somewhat behind the times but its new navigator brought it back on course, preparing a new sixth edition (published in 1976) with all

the inconsistencies removed, the etymologies successfully revised, and the new waves of scientific vocabulary (laser, neutron and so on) inserted with conspicuous success. He went on to prepare a new edition of *The Pocket Oxford Dictionary* (1978) and a seventh edition of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* in 1982.

His hobbies were of the kind that one would perhaps expect: chess, bridge, and in a legendary manner the solving of crossword puzzles. When he lived in Abingdon, for example, he used to take the bus to Harwell and had always completed *The Times* crossword before the bus reached Rowstock corner, a journey of less than a quarter of an hour. He was *The Times* National Crossword Champion ten times, winning for the last time in 1990 when he solved the four puzzles in an average time of eight minutes each and won by a record margin of nine-and-a-half minutes. (Five years earlier he had resolved to compete only in alternate years in order to give others a chance: had he not made this self-denying ordinance, he would undoubtedly have won even more times).

Throughout his working life he was renowned for his encyclopaedic grasp of detail, his immense capacity for work and his kindness to colleagues.