

The Times Cryptic Crossword Book 2

INTRODUCTION

From time to time, mischievous crossword compilers attempt an April Fool spoof, although its chances of reaching print depend largely on the degree of autonomy enjoyed by its perpetrator in the context of the series involved. A crossword editor may well be wary of the prospect of fielding a raft of flak from solvers, however good-natured the reciprocal ribbing may be.

The main stumbling-block is that the nature of cryptic clueing has so much in common with the spirit of April Fooling in the first place. Putting solvers temporarily on the wrong foot cryptically could arguably be equated to telling someone their shoelace is undone when it isn't.

Nevertheless, one crossword in this collection was designed for April 1, but rest assured that it simply has a “courtesy detail” – namely, a quartet of symmetrically-placed phrases which seemed appropriate for the occasion, so it should be easy to spot.

A few are pangrammatic, in that they contain all the letters of the alphabet, a feature which is highly unlikely to occur by accident. One is a response to a challenge from a solver, who complained that in such endeavours tricky letters were being tucked away in positions where they weren't crossed by other words. The whole alphabet appears at least once in a cross-checked position, which means a list of its solutions would include every letter twice.

Two would have been truly “dipangrammatic” (with the whole alphabet appearing twice), had ASDIC (originally crossing OXALATE) not been rejected as old hat, and ABSURDER (crossing RITZY) as too forced a comparative adjective.

But that's all cosmetic braggadocio. The clues are what really count, and Brian Greer, whose reins I have taken up, edited all the puzzles in this book with consummate expertise and style. One of his own begins this selection from the first half of 1999, which also includes a few of my own published earlier in The Times.

Mike Laws, Crossword Editor of The Times

Appended is a sample crossword 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 can stimulate as well as entertain.

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, Author of the Computer Crosswords
June 2023

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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Puzzle Number 1

ACROSS:

- 1 First issue, in 1999, for example (5,6)
- 7 Insect likely to be problematic in a year (3)
- 9 Religious system uniting man and woman (9)
- 10 Love in Paris that would be non-U in Rome? (5)
- 11 What interrogator says producing expression of amazement (1,3,3)
- 12 Immediate response in letter I posted (7)
- 13 Test depth of Channel (5)
- 15 Diver retrieved piece for explosive device (5-4)
- 17 Invalidate right to make changes on record (9)
- 19 Musician with piano in place of seaside entertainment (5)
- 20 News that is initially brought by sound of bells (7)
- 22 Every course provides this sort of bet (4,3)
- 24 American and I leave China for Spain (5)
- 25 Standard criticism attached to London police (9)
- 27 She just makes it into the first eleven (3)
- 28 Arrived early this morning, i.e. trod off street to get drunk? (5-6)

DOWN:

- 1 Seize illegal substance (3)
- 2 Thoughts of leader of assassins during fateful day? (5)
- 3 Tried to get editor to join paper (7)
- 4 Not fully understood how one's lacking basic domestic facilities (9)
- 5 One who acquires a farm building (as opposed to cellar, say) (5)
- 6 Again request harvest work (7)
- 7 Servant with carriage that helped to get Wellington on (9)
- 8 Politicians following Eden into social gathering (6,5)
- 11 Advantageous position - not the first part of record? (6,5)
- 14 Encouragement after slipping up, for example, about platform (3-1-5)
- 16 Improperly assigned to throne before time in succession (2,3,4)
- 18 Put down phone - no longer engaged? (4,3)
- 19 One accepted by Constable as likewise a great artist (7)
- 21 Sounds like sort of horse, one that starts nervously (5)
- 23 Bridge-player's abandoned this? (5)
- 26 Child that's looked after by nanny (3)

Puzzle Number 1: Solutions

ACROSS:

- 1 PRIME NUMBER
- 7 BUG
- 9 THEOSOPHY
- 10 AMOUR
- 11 I ASK YOU
- 12 RIPOSTE
- 13 SOUND
- 15 BOOBY-TRAP
- 17 DISCREDIT
- 19 PIPER
- 20 TIDINGS
- 22 EACH WAY
- 24 AMIGO
- 25 YARDSTICK
- 27 KAY
- 28 FIRST-FOOTED

DOWN:

- 1 POT
- 2 IDEAS
- 3 ESSAYED
- 4 UNPLUMBED
- 5 BUYER
- 6 REAPPLY
- 7 BOOTSTRAP
- 8 GARDEN PARTY
- 11 INSIDE TRACK
- 14 UPS-A-DAISY
- 16 ON THE TROT
- 18 RING OFF
- 19 PICASSO
- 21 SHYER
- 23 WHIST
- 26 KID