

NOTES ON LISTENER CROSSWORDS: NUMBERS 501 – 1000

Crossword No. 510: ‘Acrostic II’ by Afrit

The acrostic involved gave: “PROPER GOOSE GOBBLES GOEBBELS’ PROPAGANDA”. World War II, which had started over three months before, had clearly motivated this puzzle.

Crossword No. 511: ‘Gambits’ by Josephus

“Some competitors have disputed the use of the term ‘anagram’ to justify a jumble of letters which do not themselves make up a word. This use would appear to have authority behind it; but it is agreed that some other expression, such as ‘mixed’ would be clearer.”

This provoked the following letter (1 February 1940).

What is an Anagram?

I was interested to see what was said in the report on Crossword No. 511 about the term ‘anagram’. The simpler dictionaries (Chambers, Nuttall, Concise Oxford) indicate only *words from words* as permissible; and the others (Shorter Oxford, Lloyd, and Webster) suggest the same as far as modern meaning is concerned. It is made clear, however, that the literal meaning is ‘the letters of a word read backwards’ (which again is not a ‘mixture’); and it is only in Lloyd, so far as I have gone (I have not looked up O.E.D.), that anything else is indicated. ‘Huyghens also announced’ (it says, *inter alia*) ‘his discovery of a Saturn’s ring in the following anagram :—aaaaaa iiiiii ... uuuuu’; the use of the word ‘anagram’ lends colour to your statement that the jumble ‘would appear to have authority behind it’, but on the whole, I think, the indications are that it is an obsolete use. At any rate, your decision to use ‘mixed’ for a jumble will keep things clear.

Newcastle-on-Tyne

THOMAS CARTER

A further letter appeared (signed by the setter’s pseudonym) on 8 February 1940.

What is an Anagram?

Having, in simple innocence, started the ‘anagram’ hare, perhaps I may be allowed to join in the chase. There is no doubt that your correspondents are perfectly right who have pointed out that, according to the dictionaries, an anagram must, strictly speaking, constitute a word or phrase, or at any rate bear a significant meaning. John Bunyan’s ‘anagram’ of his name—‘Nu hony in a B’—is an example. But I fancy that in crossword composition this definition is not invariably adhered to, and the history of that celebrated ‘Enegram Tea’ which caused Mr. Kipps so much embarrassment indicates that, at any rate in some unquestionably refined circles, a considerable latitude has been accepted as permissible. For, although Mr. Kipps endeavoured to attach a significant meaning to TOECO (‘Toe Company, like’), it is impossible to claim that CYP SHI, or even WOGDELENK would satisfy the canons of the lexicographers.

Perhaps we may leave the last word with that young lady (mysteriously labelled SIR BUBH) who said : ‘Don’t you think anagrams are something chronic?’

Beckenham

JOSEPHUS

Crossword No. 516: Alphabet II by Proton

“Proton regrets slip in note, giving eight lights starting with A. He should have known his alpha better.”

Crossword No. 520: General by Sirius

“ ‘Sirius’ thanks those who sent criticisms (whether adverse or favourable), which he welcomes; ... The number of words in a solution is not given, lest the puzzles become too easy.”

Crossword No. 522: Crossword No. 522 by Sirius

“Come, pull up your socks, you would-be solvers who want puzzles none too easy. Instead of a hundred and more solutions with seventy per cent. correct, there are just two brave poor entries, neither quite right, though one was really too near to be considered a complete failure. ... Sirius is sad at having so simply stumped you—or weren’t you really trying?” [See No. 528.]

Crossword No. 528: Crossword No. 528 by Sirius

“Excellent entry, mostly correct Sirius is happy to say. He will announce when the First Hundred Thousand is reached!” [See No. 552.]

Crossword No. 552: Crossword No. 552 by Sirius

“A new record in entries. Does this indicate a widening circle of interest, or was the puzzle somewhat easier? Or a little of each? Perhaps experiment will show in time, bombing permitting.”

Scanning the prize lists does indicate an increase in new names, with the regulars appearing less frequently. They do tend to crop up in the lists for a very difficult puzzle. A further notable phenomenon is an increase in female winners, at least those identified by “Miss” or “Mrs”.

Crossword No. 557: Mishmash by Tracer

For the first time, reference was made to how many entries there had been: over seventy, more than half correct, which shows that checking was, at least on this occasion, applied to all the entry, not just those selected for a prize.

Crossword No. 560: Crossword No. 560 by Sirius

“The difficulty was mainly the hidden reverse of 27; and now, of course, that dodge won’t catch you again.”

[27 Down was “In the past we enjoyed it on rising”, answer TWEEN (hidden) entered in reverse.]

Crossword No. 562: Greek by Pollux

The prizewinners included D S Macnutt [**Ximenes**].

Crossword No. 572: Crossword No. 572 by Sirius

“A new record in solvers, though nearly 30 per cent. did not get this puzzle correct.”

Crossword No. 582: Crossword No. 582 by Sirius

Next to the puzzle, the following notice appeared:

Consolation Prize

Owing to the increasing number of crossword competitors, it has been decided to award a consolation prize (book token, value 7s. 6d. [the same as the standard prize]) to the entrant who sends in the greatest number of correct solutions during the next six months, and who has not been fortunate enough to win a prize during that period. The adjacent crossword (No. 582) is the first to count in this new scheme.

Crossword No. 603: A Bit Fishy by Joxon

“One solver wrote complaining of the easiness of the puzzle; another wrote ‘difficult but excellent’. *Quot homines ...*”

Crossword No. 608: A Little Rugger by Sirius

Next to the puzzle, the following notice appeared:

Consolation Prize

On May 8 we announced that we would give a consolation prize to the entrant who sent in the greatest number of correct solutions, but who did not receive a prize during the following six months. The Rev. P. Lewis (Lyminge) has qualified for this prize by solving 15 crosswords correctly. Runners-up are Sir S. Dannreuther (14), H. A. Scutt (12), and S. J. Donovan (11). Of the 26 crosswords set, Thomas Carter and L. A. Jones have each sent in 23 correct solutions, but have already received prizes during the six months. We propose to award another consolation prize on the same terms for the next six months.

Remarkably, Carter and Jones were the sole winners in the puzzle (No. 607) whose solution appeared the very next week.

The checkers appear to have overlooked the fact that Rev. Lewis won a prize in No. 587, the sixth in the series.

Crossword No. 609: A Literary Crossword by Doggerel

“This crossword was appreciated by solvers who like a really difficult puzzle.”
[The redoubtable solvers Carter and Jones, not surprisingly, featured in the prize list.]

Crossword No. 630: 221B Revisited by Peter Quince

In a rare indication of the level of entry, the solution notes read:

“119 correct solutions were received, several with the apt comment ‘6 with 32 rev.’ Each of the 11 incorrect solutions contrived to contain a unique error.”

The relevant clue was “6. *with 32 rev.* ‘....., my dear Watson’ (6)”, leading to ELEMEN + YRAT (rev). The TRAY entry was also involved in a SE + DEN + TARY reference to Mycroft Holmes.

Crossword No. 639: Dickens by Dexter

“A good number of competitors sent in solutions to this puzzle even though the top left-hand corner had to be largely guesswork owing to the omission of Clue 2, for which we apologise. No one has been disqualified for failure at 1 across and 2 down.”

Crossword No. 648: Proverbial by Jabberwock

“We fear we gave even our best team of solvers too much to guess at in this puzzle, and several of them have said so kindly, but firmly; one old friend, for instance, prescribes the proverbial boiling oil for Jabberwock. ... In the upshot, there was only one correct solver, or if the term is preferred, thought-reader, and prizewinner ... whom we congratulate on his perspicacity—or clairvoyance.”

Crossword No. 667: Inexcusable Ignorance by Peter Quince

This puzzle set a new record for the number of entries (mostly correct).

Crossword No. 675: Analogonyms by Tesremos

This was the debut puzzle by D S Macnutt, better known as **Ximenes**. (His Pseudonym in the *Listener* series spelt “Somerset” backwards.) It produced only three winners, the first puzzle in 1943 not to have a full complement of winners; the only other such puzzle was also by **Tesremos**.)

“Many solvers failed only at the last letter of 3D. For 46A TAGPIE (mag, magpie, tag) is accepted as an alternative. Tesremos thanks competitors for kind words.”

Crossword No. 678: Artists by Jim

“‘Jim’ regrets the published puzzle appeared so ‘tempera-mental’—dare he say surreal? Having become ecstatic at finding places for 30 painters, 2 poets, a musician and an architect in his Gallery he forgot the need for a clearly marked catalogue! [There follows a list of various misnumberings and other errors.] He hopes the rest of the puzzle will enable him to evade impeachment by a solvers’ ‘hanging committee’ and heartily congratulates those who were not repulsed by the imperfect chiaroscuro of his hasty and naïve brushwork.”

Crossword No. 684: Puzzled Puzzlers by Scorpio

Eight grid entries were words formed from a jumble of the setters: **Afrit, Castor, Doggerel, Joxon, Pollux, Proton, Sirius and Tracer**.

Crossword No. 687: Chessboard by Tesremos

The second puzzle by this setter contained an error: “Tesremos deplores KB3 for QB3 at Bl. 9—a printer’s error over which he had no control.”

Crossword No. 689: Swan-Song by Doggerel

This was the final puzzle in the very long series by **Doggerel**: 175 puzzles.

“Doggerel heartily thanks solvers for their farewell greetings.”

Crossword No. 716: Doublets by Tesremos

The third puzzle by **Tesremos** [**Ximenes**], two of which were the only puzzles not to have a full set of prizewinners in 1943.

“1A mirdha’d [the answer] all but one competitor.” This clue involved an indirect anagram: “Shrouded sheep may be ...” leading to an anagram of “hid ram”.

Crossword No. 725: Anagramania by Pangloss

Unrelated to this puzzle, the *Points from Letters* page included a letter from “D S Macnutt” (**Tesremos/Ximenes**), complaining of cuts and other adaptations made to Rattigan’s play *Flarepath*, when broadcast on the radio.

Crossword No. 729: Jig-Shaw by Potomac

The crossword column contained an announcement of a significant increase in the book token prize, starting the following week: from 7s 6d to 12s 6d.

Crossword No. 731: Venture atte Bowe by Dugoût

One of the prizewinners, with a military title, gave an address in “Bletchley”. The top secret code-cracking establishment at Bletchley Park doubtless accommodated crossword enthusiasts, but none had thus far won a prize, at least not from that address.

Crossword No. 765: ‘I Lisp’d in Numbers’ by Scorpio

“Scorpio suffered an overwhelming defeat at the pens of what is for him a record number of correct entries. But even so, he triumphed over a number of solvers, who either carelessly failed to verify their working or formed words which do not exist.”

Crossword No. 786: Cryptonym 2 by Proton

The coding scheme used was to write the alphabet as two sets of 13 letters, one above the other, with a name (to be deduced) at the start, with the remaining letters in alphabetical order. An example was given, using the name MACINTYRE, now known to be **Proton**’s real name.

Crossword No. 800: Poetic Numbers by Scorpio

“There was trouble in the east: the ‘star’ [x] of XXIV [clue numbering method] was unbarred, and XXII and XXIII were interchanged. Scorpio apologises for these inaccuracies ... Andrew McIntyre (Edinburgh) [**Proton**] was the only competitor to solve the puzzle correctly.”

Crossword No. 803: Theme V by Proton

“The blocked type proved to be rather difficult and, in a small entry, there were only five correct solutions.”

Crossword No. 814: Verbarium I by Proton

“All correct in an excellent entry.”

Crossword No. 852: Four Fours by W. McNaught

“This competition took an unexpected course owing to the setter’s inadvertent omission of a clause ruling out factorials. All but two of the competitors used factorials, which greatly ease the problem and admit alternatives. The solution here given is obtained without factorials and is unique.”

The solution listed exactly how the entries were to be constructed using four instances of 4, together with arithmetic operations, in which the square root, decimal point and a dot above 4 to indicate the repeating fraction $0.44444\dots = 4/9$ were allowed. For example, $49 = 44 + \sqrt{4} / .4$.

Crossword No. 865: The X37-bibbing 37by Tracer

“A very large entry, helped to some extent by the inadvertent publication of the Notes with the puzzle.”

Crossword No. 873: Two Sees by Afrit

For this renowned puzzle it was noted that there was: “A very fair entry, but few correct”.

Crossword No. 940: Double Demon by Div

This puzzle appeared on April 1st (1948). The clues were all “Definition and Letter Mixtures” (DLM) and solvers were told there was a message to be read from the diagonals, the central column and central row.

“ ‘Div’ thanks solvers for their many appreciative comments. He apologises sincerely for having made an April Fool of himself by inadvertently ‘losing’ the anagrams in 54d and 56d. About half the entrants spotted there was a double solution—as was indicated truthfully by the ‘message’.”

The solution revealed the message to be: “This Poisson D’Avril yields two alternate resolutions; this is solved OK”. The other grid was also printed, with the message: “April Fool: this is a wrong solution; there’s another one, so start off again”. Unusually, the letters that did not contribute to the messages were printed in lower case, presumably to highlight the messages.

Crossword No. 988: Little Pigley Farm, 1935 by Surveyor

“We apologise for the publication of Crossword No. 988, which we have since learned appeared in *The Penguin Problems Book* (1940) by W.T. Williams and G.H. Savage.”

Crossword No. 1000: Jubilate by Altair

This appearance of this puzzle was anticipated by a Leading Article the preceding week, entitled, in large bold figures, “999”. In spite of its title and the appearance with puzzle No. 999, it was clearly a summation of the experience of publishing 1000 puzzles. It ended:

“For nearly twenty years then these puzzles have retained, not their popularity—that would be too comprehensive a word—but their interest: a delight to those who delight in them, a source of vexation to those who allow themselves to be vexed, and for the rest of us a standing reminder of man’s age-long passion, as in the nursery so in the upper reaches of learning, for propounding riddles and trying to find the answers.”