

Summary

1. December 2017 Competition
2. Clues & Explanations
3. 2018 Calendar - £4,000+ to date
4. January 2018 deadline

1. December 2017 Competition

A very warm welcome to our new 3D solvers. Please do send in your solution. It cheers everybody up!
(Prizes are funded by private subscription, not project funds.)
Deadline February 15th

The December competition with a brilliant heart transplant grid by '45' (the late Ray Parry-Morris) and clued superbly by Enigmatist, was won by Jos Tate of Preston, Aistralia. Excellent solving!

Feedback included:

What an excellent puzzle to end the year with. Plenty hard enough with some really trick clues. I especially liked the obscure reference to 'Bumble' in Clue 3. I must admit that I don't understand the meaning of clues 2 and 6 but I hope I got the answers anyway.

So that's it for another year. I hope you and Mrs Sirius have a super Christmas and that 2018 is even better than this year. JM

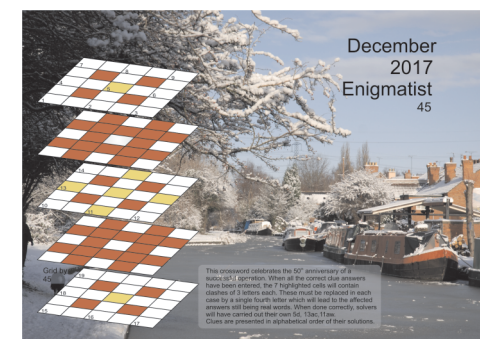
Never found Enigmatist easy but this must have been the trickiest one yet. With clues such as 4ac Acted, 6d Dozed and 14ac Sizes had my head reeling! Eventually, the same wavelength as Enigmatist was tuned into, nearly!

Many thanks for a great ending to the 2017 3D Calendar and looking forward with great gusto to 2018 3D which looks great! PC

Thank you for a fabulous end of year puzzle.

Given the introduction, getting to Dr Barnard was straight forward enough. But then all this talk of clusters of three letters replaced by a fourth was totally confusing.

And then it hit me. The middle letter of heart was A, the middle letter of trans was A and the middle letter of plant was A too, and so I was on my way! How very, very clever! I'm not sure I have answered all of the clues correctly. I always hold my breath when that old tricky, trickster Enigmatist is in town, but I managed to discover the beauty of this puzzle – if beauty is the appropriate word – and for me that represents a moral victory!
Happy New Year and Good Health to everyone at HQ. GS



Background photograph on clues page shows Hearts football team
- another interesting theme, with a head-scratching twist! It took me ages to work out where I was supposed to be going, and I do hope I've got the right end of the stick with the yellow squares, or I'm going to look a proper Charlie.

I'm looking forward to another year of exciting 3D crosswords, and can't wait to start on January's offering once I've stowed away the Christmas decorations. SF

December entry attached. A fitting challenge! Not sure if I've got them all right - couldn't parse 2 or 3 - unfortunately a little pressed for time. I'm in the midst of helping my son move house among other things, so sadly haven't had time to complete a tie break. Apologies for that. Hopefully you'll get plenty of submissions. JP

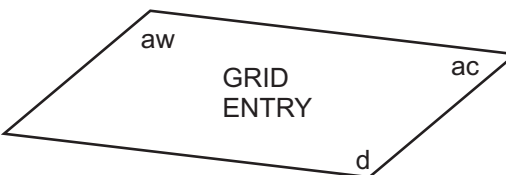
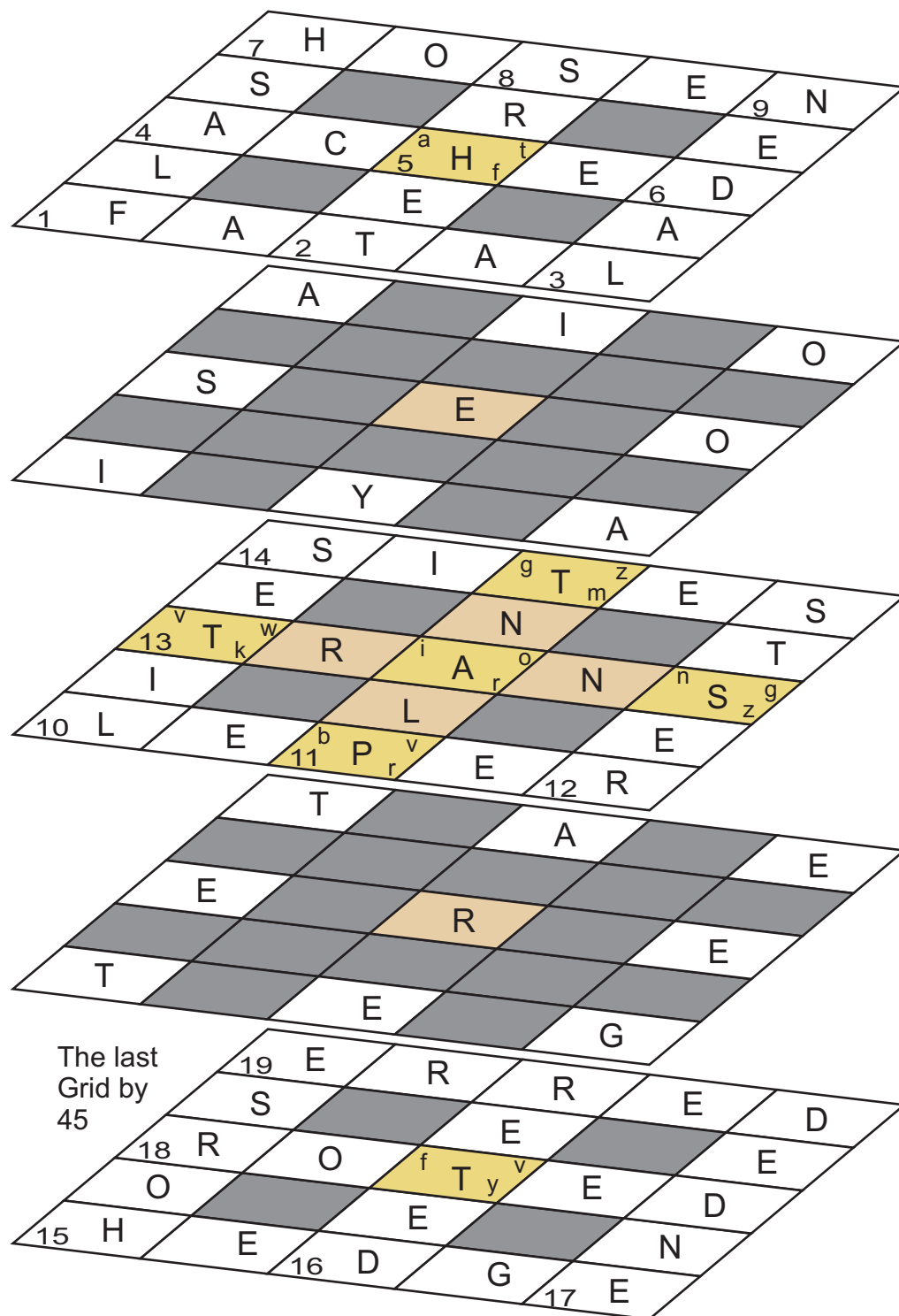
This really was a fitting final joint contribution from RPM and Enigmatist. A truly splendid PDM leading to Heart Transplant when the way forward looked bleak brought a fitting finale to its climax. It came to me whilst swimming off some of the Christmas excesses. Some of the parsing for the interim solutions was particularly testing. Even now I'm not entirely sure that my solution is 100% correct. Thank you for another great year of 3D crosswords. Agd

hat a superb grid to finish the year - executed, one might say, with surgical precision! 24 had me scratching my head for ages and I'm still not entirely convinced. I was not familiar with the David Lloyd referred to on day 3 and so went searching for a likely connection to the theme and found a heart transplant recipient by that name. Coincidence? No such thing in this game, surely.

Thanks also for the mention in the last newsletter, and the extra calendar which arrived last week. I shall attempt to lure new converts with it. JT

December 2017 Enigmatist 45

Dr Christiaan Barnard carried out the first human heart transplant on 3rd December 1967.



The key diagram above shows a cell in the grid where a transplant has taken place. The central letter is the grid entry and the result of the transplant. Three letters which clash have been replaced by one. The three letters replaced came from solutions to clues in the across (ac), away (aw) and down (d) directions.



Enigmatist and '45' RNIB Cup
Penderel's Oak, Holborn 2013

Brilliant concept, good spot that there's a A in the middle of each component of the phrase. Hardly any difficult words either, but as usual John's cluing was incredibly deceptive and some of the answers in the middle tier had no checked letters. Still, got there in the end! AW

– a clever and tricky one to wind up 2017.

Hope it has been as good a year for you as it has for us.

Merry Christmas to you and all your helpers. T&CH

Total foxed. Tried everything. Can't work out solutions to 24ac and 6d. Well done! RE

I disagree. We didn't win. We failed. The perfect crossword interests, tantalises, challenges and then finally with the solver fully engaged, yields.

Very difficult without being able to use the shaded cells as checking letters! I have to confess that 20aw is a guess. And 14ac isn't much better! GB

Heart transplant came almost straightaway. A while before understanding replacing the 3 letters part! Then mostly straightforward except for 19, solved and 24? Anyway here it is – now in north of New Zealand, nice and warm. DM

I have said before how I admire these grids that have no turned corners – just 5 or 7 letter words in each direction and this one was special. SC

Last day Dan here again, with a poor attempt at this fine puzzle. It was indeed a very fine way to end the year - a 3D grid with a very unusual trick.

I got the thematic HEART TRANS PLANT central snowflake reasonably early but I have been stuck on some of the dozen crossers that only have 2/5 confirming crossing letters - plus the knowledge that the answer must deliver a real word when the appropriate letter from HEART TRANS PLANT is substituted.

In the end there is one clue I simply cannot solve 14A: I have fallen down those "descending peaks".

So I made a random guess and filled in SATES thinking SAKES might have been the actual answer (for no good reason)

Onward and upward for 2018 AJR

Some very difficult clues. I confess I haven't totally understood all of them. JBu

Another clever, clever one! I loved doing this one but I am afraid that 2 entries are guesses – 10aw and 14ac. Thanks to everyone who can be thanked. JR

Nice treatment of the theme. I was held up for a while by LIVES and SIZES, but no complaints about any of the clues. TH

Some very difficult clues. I confess I have not understood all of them. JB

3. Funds raised by 2018 Calendar - £4,000 to date

Since the 12.1 December Newsletter we have raised a further £1,000 with more crossword websites and blogs giving their endorsements. I am grateful to Guardian Crossword Editor, Hugh Stephenson for his glowing support, as well as Brian Head - Crossword Club, Derek Harrison-Crossword Centre, Christine Jones - One Across, Pears Fundraising Group, Nora, Puck, Enigmatist, many 3D solvers putting posters up, solvers making bulk orders to supply friends with a year's entertainment or pleasurable torture Thank you everybody for the terrific team effort.

We have broken the sales record by about £500!

There's still over two weeks to go before the deadline of February 15th for the first January puzzle.

I will be sending off a cheque for £2000 to BBC Children in Need Appeal this week and another cheque for £2000 to RNIB Pears Centre.

Then all we have to do is to have some fun with the 12 superb 3D crosswords lined up for us this year 2018.

Yippee!



Clue Explanations 12 DEC 2017 ENIGMATIST Grid by 45

Dr Christiaan Barnard carried out the first human heart transplant on 3rd December 1967.

Suggested preamble

This crossword celebrates the 50th anniversary of a successful operation. When the clue answers are entered, the 7 highlighted cells will contain clashes of 3 letters each. These must be replaced by a fourth letter which will lead to the affected answers still being real words. When done correctly, solvers will have carried out their own 5d, 13ac-11aw.

SOL		Direction – Clue - Enumeration	Explanation	Grid Entry
ACTED	1	4ac Alongside buddy on Excellent Adventure, Bill did (5)	AC,TED ref film <i>Bill & Ted's E A</i>	ACHED
ASKER	2	4d One seeks something from Red Ken's collection? (5)	ASKER 2 mnngs Ken L famously breeds newts	ASTER
BLING	3	11aw What David Lloyd's given to tramp, missing conspicuous wealth (5)	(bum)BLING David Lloyd aka Bumble	PLANT
DEFER	4	16aw Was the field official half-hearted about yield? (5)	DEF(f)ER rev	DETER
DOZED	5	6d Was 50% off just shy of 12 old pennies? (5)	DOZE(n),D	DOSED
ENDED	6	17aw Over at Troy came to blows (5)	(at/T)ENDED, blows=vb	
ERRED	7	19ac German men stripping before their country were 27 (5)	(h)ERRE(n),D, ref clue 27	
FATAL	8	1ac Atropine, perhaps, at the heart of a talk (5)	(o)FATAL(k), i.e. of Atropos, a Fate	

FERRY	9	5d Young Queen Bess is aboard...this? (5)	F[ER]RY	HEART
FILTH	10	1d What's sordid night-life covering up? (5)	FILTH hidden rev	
FLASH	11	1aw Vulgar moment (5)	FLASH 2 mnngs	
HASTE	12	7d <i>Virgin</i> denied light speed – too much of this? (5)	(c)HASTE	
HEDGE	13	15ac Periphery of house primarily defending garden's effects? (5)	H(edg)E, D.G.E. first letters	
HORSE	14	15aw Husky's not a runner, of course (5)	HO(a)RSE	
HOSEN	15	7ac Pants, these Berlin-style "Jumbo" chicken sandwiches (5)	H[OS}EN, sandwiches=vb	
LADEN	16	3aw Cargo aboard, liner's beginning to approach Red Sea port (5)	L/ADEN	
LARGE	17	3d Big Dong at last introduced to Lear's absurdity (5)	LAR[(don)G]E anag	
LEVER	18	10ac Bar area cleared when show's over (5)	L(a)EVER rev	LEPER
LIVES	19	10aw Is not half as bad with 3-D approach? (5)	LIVE, S(a) all rev, away clue so reversal is "approaching", def='is'	LITES
		Is not half as bad in retrospect (5)		
NOSED	20	9d Proceeded with caution for Romans, but with no going ahead (5)	NO, SED sed=L. 'but'	
RENTS	21	12aw They happen when you split amounts given to landlords (5)	RENTS 2 mnngs	RESTS
ROVED	22	18ac Reversing round 9 port, medic went on a cruise (5)	ROVED cf Dover, DR rev, ref clue 9	ROTED
SIMAR	23	8d Coat of arms awfully self-consuming (5)	S[I]MAR anag	SITAR
SIZES	24	14ac They're descending peaks of Lyskamm, Matterhorn and Shani (5)	SIZES i.e. L(arge), M(edium), S(mall)	SITES
TEARS	25	2aw 21 waterfalls (5)	TEARS 2 mnngs, ref clue 21	TEHRS
TYRED	26	2d Out of warranty, redeployed – at least partially roadworthy (5)	TYRED hidden	TYPED
WRONG	27	13ac It's not just Weasley mugging one in wig (5)	W[IRON, for I]G	TRANS

4. January Competition Deadline

The deadline for entries to the January Competition is February 15th. The reason for this is to include as many people as possible from those joining in this month. But do be careful! Completing February can be a bit tight! The deadlines revert to midnight of the last day each month till December when it slips to January 15th 2019 to allow Nora a break at Christmas.

Tie-break 2017 Results

Hello Everyone,
I hope the New Year is well underway and that those with resolutions remain resolved.
Thank you so much for all the good wishes for the year and appreciations of 2017.
The purpose of this news communication is to publish the results of the 2017 Tie-Break Competition which has been fantastic – an excellent contest between experience and fresh-faced enthusiasm.
I include the evidence, judgements and decisions in the body of this email which may be alright for some. I also attach a Word document containing the same which will suit some others better.
My huge thanks go to Curmudgeon and husband Charles for their insightful judging of the clues.
Another January Newsletter will follow with a December 2017 round-up in a few days. I made the tie-break judging a priority. The entries have been so varied and interesting that it has taken me a longer period of intense wandering to arrive at a decision on grid designs.
I will circulate these to both 2017 circulation lists (subject labelled 7a, 7b, 7c etc) and to the new lists based on purchases of the 2018 calendar (subject labelled 8a, 8b, 8c etc). I will have made errors, so please contact me if you do not receive the '8' version. Assuming you wish to receive it!!
There will be cases where someone else has bought the calendar and presented it as a gift or a punishment.

Most of all, thank you for supporting our project to help youngsters in need.

Very best wishes for a Happy and Healthy 2018,

Eric Westbrook
Registered Blind RNIB Membe
& Public Speaker

3D Crossword Designer *Sirius*
Software development for
independent blind crossword solving

This is always a wonderful time of year.
Successful solvers emerge from the marathon of twelve monthly puzzles clued by twelve very different setters, to take on the task of designing a 3D crossword grid and to write a clue for one of the solutions.

The high standard of submissions has been maintained. Some familiar designers have taken a rest whilst remaining very prepared to supply grids for bare months. Several solvers new to 3D have made excellent designs. The established high achievers had better watch out!

It is a huge pleasure to wander around the new grids, sparkling with fresh ideas, to admire the skill and imagination with which they have been constructed and speculate on how the feat was achieved. Many of the grids are the product of many, many hours of shunting operations, trying to keep theme words, finding accommodations and spotting new opportunities, tidying the sock drawer looking for inspiration. Concentration in the planning and then deciding when to 'go for it'.

The commitment of creativity, effort and manipulative skills is hugely appreciated. The time spent in the judging recognises this. One grid might take only an hour or two. Another, more complex or troubled grid might be measured in days before it yields its secrets or a route is found to ready it for calendar inclusion in 2019. This is time well spent.

Thank you so much everyone for the terrific grids produced.

	Grid Design judged by Sirius Nos 1-9 identification only and not order of merit	Clue judged by Shirley and Charles Curran
1. AG	<p>The theme will raise a smile celebrating some 'Fake News'. The designer has thought, and gives advice about, how aspects of the puzzle might be presented.</p> <p>This large thoughtfully constructed 9x7x5 rectangular grid and solutions within, are clearly presented. Six thematic entries plus an anagram of an umbrella term are carefully set out and then the grid is completed skilfully with few accommodations other than some reversals, an occasional snake. There are six bars including a vertical bar. Three of these affect the 3D quality of the grid, but this is minimal in such a large size. Given the challenge of grid completion, there are few obscure words and these are all referenced. Most bars could be eliminated by arches but given the above they are not needed.</p> <p>[Incidentally, the designer manages to restrict the number of solutions to 43 which is exceptional for this size of grid and means it can be accommodated in a printed calendar. It is noted that the puzzle is month and day specific but not tied to a particular year. A useful property in avoiding clashes with other grids. None of this features in the marking]</p> <p>Solutions correctly directed but with two slight deviations from conventions – 'b' for 'ba' and length of snake section indicated in brackets rather than with hyphen and comma. (Piddling!)</p> <p>The percentage of thematic cells is a respectable 47% for this size of grid.</p> <p>Solutions show a wide range of word and phrase length. Just 2 non-Chambers words other than proper nouns and referenced in other dictionaries.</p> <p>This grid is a very good basis for a fine puzzle.</p> <p>Very Highly Commended</p>	<p>Clue for MANX: 'On Man cross' (4) A partial 'and lit' clue. Man serves as part of the definition and also as part of the wordplay. Explanation Definition 'On man' in the sense of 'of or relating to the Isle of Man'. Word play 'man(x)' i.e. man plus cross.</p> <p>Highly commended: A three-word clue is always to be commended for its succinctness and for the ability to include both the definition and wordplay in such a brief format. This clue has the added delight of being partially &lit (rather than, say, a double definition clue). Editors might grumble that the solution is spelled out in the clue and that the clue is over-easy since the solver is likely to grasp it immediately and, knowing that four letters are required, to see no alternative. However, we like it, and feel that surrounded by longer and more difficult clues, it would be a real winner.</p>

<div>2. JT</div>	<p>The gorgeous presentation showing technical graphic art skills of this beautifully crafted 7x5x6 grid, follows the exemplar given and is perfect in most respects with a very minor disagreement about one word included in the thematic set. There is one typo in the large number of clue directions.</p> <p>The theme is well chosen, not known to me (which means nothing) and most interesting. Further, the theme is not obvious during the solving since a group of thematic words has to be formed before the purple vapours crystalise. The puzzle then moves to another stage in the solving with two anagrams of highlighted groups of cells. This is not just a diverting extra but a vital penny dropper. (it would be for me). The most alert of solvers might keep an eye on the letters forming in the anagrams and solve before complete to assist solutions elsewhere.</p> <p>Finally, the mists clear. A work of fundamental importance is revealed. Very nice prospect if we get the preamble right..</p> <p>The designer shows dexterity in the 3D construction techniques of reversals, blends, snakes, achieving a percentage of thematic cells of 63% which is very good for a large grid. Furthermore, this is achieved without any bars, and no elastoplastic arches. And, all words bar proper nouns are in Chambers except one very well known word which is referenced. That has not happened by accident and suggests excellent planning, jig-sawing and choice of theme words.</p> <p>The 7x6x5 grid ensures variety of word lengths 5,6,7 with an 8 and a couple of 9's plus name of creator and work, plus the famous phrase. There are no obscure words and most can be found in Oxford Compact Dictionary. Another notable achievement.</p> <p>This is a wonderful first 3D crossword design. I note that thematic percentages derived from theme words are high in the odd levels and low in the intervening layers of unchecked letters. It is not unusual to find down solutions less well represented in the thematic set in early designs. Nevertheless, this is a brilliant debut.</p> <p>[This model submission would make a super exemplar. Files can be imported and sent to setters with few changes. Not part of marking criteria other than clarity.]</p> <p>This will make a fine puzzle.</p> <p>Very Highly Commended</p>	<p>Clue for COLORLESS 'White American no greater than small business shylock essentially' (9)</p> <p>Explanation: Definition = white (American sp.) CO + [shy]L[ock] + OR LESS</p> <p>Highly Commended: The compiler has striven for a satisfactory surface reading and remembered that an American spelling has to be mentioned in the clue, and has thus made this 'American' have nounal value. Using the L of Shylock for the 'small business' and 'small business' for the reduced COmpany' works well too. Chambers accepts 'colourless' as a definition of white (but also, of course, defines white as a colour). We are not totally convinced that the solver will understand 'OR LESS' to be 'no greater than' but accept that the notion is difficult to clue. There is possibly a problem with the word order since a pedantic solver would be reading it as OR LESS CO L. Still, this is a meaty clue that creates a picture.</p>
------------------	---	---

<div>3.</div> <div>KW</div>	<div> <p>A very clearly presented, well weaved, and complex 8x5x6 grid with many twists and turns. Clue directions show mastery of the conventions with just two minor slips.</p> <p>The presentation includes blank numbered grid, another with thematic entries only, a solution grid and a grid with indication of starting points and turns. This helps the marking greatly.</p> <p>Six solutions can be formed entirely from other solutions. Their purpose seems to be to avoid what would otherwise be bars. They maintain the 3D quality but it is a factor to consider in setting the difficulty and imaginativeness of clues. They could be left out of the cluing. Or, something could be made of it in concealing other solutions perhaps. A few of the woven threads are largely formed before arriving at their clues but are used to 'mop up' odd letters.</p> <p>This raises an issue when we review our criteria for judging grid design. But we can ask the question now “Do such overlaps affect the quality of the eventual puzzle?” However we answer that, there is no doubt of the designer's great skill in removing bars once they appear transiently. Could the bars be avoided in the first place? The answer is almost certainly yes, at the expense of reducing the number of theme solutions. There is a balance to be struck and the designer has done well to find it here.</p> <p>The theme is well known and will be enjoyed by solvers as it emerges in the solving.</p> <p>The designer shows great dexterity in 3D design techniques – reversals, snakes and blends, and just one bar. Several potential bars are avoided by excellent weaving. With such a high thematic percentage, this is not surprising.</p> <p>The designer is genuinely thinking in three dimensions – not just focussing on one plane at a time and then trying to link them. The theme is well represented in all six levels.</p> <p>There is a very good range of word and phrase lengths.</p> <p>There is just one non-Chambers word clearly identified and referenced from another dictionary.</p> <p>The percentage of thematic cells is 64%, which is very good for this size of grid. The theme content of the puzzle is even higher when measured in other ways, for instance where a word is used more than once in different solutions,</p> <p>Further interest is given by use of two colour coded thematic anagrams. Each of these letters is separate from the thematic set which will not have happened by accident. The designer does not claim these to boost the percentage, but if one did, it would rise to 78%.</p> <p>With consideration of the bars/overlap issue, this will make a fine puzzle.</p> <p>Very Highly Commended</p> </div>	<div> <p>Clue for PROLETARIAT: 'Workers for hire stand in for vanguard in line of pickets?' (11) PROLETARIAT - (PRO + LET) for L in LARIAT (picketing rope)</p> <p>Very Highly commended: Chambers gives as one of its definitions 'wage-earning class' which justifies the use of the simple 'workers' when 'proletariat' is perhaps rather more than that - the poorest labouring social class in a specific context. The compiler has produced a fine surface reading that creates an image of unemployed labourers standing in for the front row of more militant workers. We like the way, too, that he has deceptively interpreted PRO LET to give 'for' and 'hire'. My only doubt would be about the clue grammar since 'PROLET' actually 'stands' in for the L or LARIAT (You might argue that 'PRO LET' is a combination of two parts so requires 'stand in' but would be on shaky ground, we think). This could have been resolved by the use of 'standing'. The compiler expects a double leap from the solver - initially recognising that 'line of pickets' = LARIAT, and then asking him to understand that the 'vanguard' L or Lariat is involved in a substitution. This is difficult and renders the clue difficult. However, there is a fine and very clever visual clue here.</p> </div>
-----------------------------	---	--

<div>4. PD</div>	<p>Crystal clear, near-perfect presentation (a dream to mark) of this well-constructed 5x5x5 grid with 8 thematic entries, possibly nine, achieved with one bar and one snake, for a thematic percentage of cells at 47% perhaps 52%. All words except proper nouns are in Chambers (which includes 2 words that the designer suggests are obscure. But they are in Chambers. The theme will be nostalgic for some and a mystery to others.</p> <p>This is a super first design in 3D. The designer's directions and numbering are correct with just one slip. Dexterity with 3D techniques is apparent with reversals, a snake and a bar. This promises much for the future we hope.</p> <p>Word lengths are largely of 5 letters with an occasional variation. This would make a good January introduction to 3D for new solvers. Difficulty can be increased by making it a jigsaw, or by leaving out three solutions from the cluing which are obviously theme –related, leaving the solver to find the theme and complete the grid.</p> <p>Highly Commended</p>	<p>Clu4. Clue for CREDO: 'I believe the furnishings need rearranging' (5) CREDO = I believe anagram of décor</p> <p>Commended: When I submitted my very first crossword a long time ago, the Editor very gently explained to me that I was using indirect anagrams. The rule in the 'crossworld' is that the material that is to be anagrammed (that is the letters of the required word) must be present within the clue - so that to pass muster, this clue would need to read 'I believe décor needs rearranging', which would, of course, be rather too obvious and unsatisfactory. Setters are prompted, too about crossword grammar. Here the intention is that 'décor' has to become CREDO so 'needs' is the required word in clue grammar. The surface reading is fine so praise for that.</p>
----------------------	---	---

5.
MJ

This beautifully presented 7x5x7 grid was an ambitious choice for a first design. There is clear evidence of skills in word weaving, and difficult words to weave at that. One in particular involving a name and a country is very pleasing. I wondered if the large size of grid was determined by snaking a very long name. This is pleasing to do but immediately reduces flexibility. This led to the difficult task of fitting in further thematic entries and then the extremely taxing challenge of completing the grid. The designer achieves this with 7 bars and a lot of skill particularly in 2D. Nevertheless a creditable 29% thematic cells is achieved.

I am impressed with this terrific effort and the designer knows there is a lot more that can be done, but the time ran out. The designer reports making a start on 2020 any time now!

Most of the conventions are followed as deduced from the twelve or so puzzles this year, the designer being unsure in one situation where I have added a bar.

Dexterity is shown in reversals, snakes, blends, arches and bars.

One way of improving thematic content is to expand the pool of themed or theme related word, giving greater choice when looking for opportunities to weave.s. Thematic entries here are confined to name of person and places visited. Just RPM might go from Bond and Money Penny to world currencies etc. That's all part of choice of theme.

The theme is just right for the calendars. It is not particularly well know, but it ought to be! That is rather subjective. And then it is interesting to discover what the person did and its impact.

There is more than enough here to recognise qualities of a future champion.

Commended.

Clue for: **REVILES**
'Deplores end of fine silver rattles' (7)
(E + SILVER)*

Highly commended: We were amused by the anagram indicator (rattles) and the way that the nounal sense of the word was incorporated into the clue to give a plausible surface reading (though it is a slight stretch of the imagination to understand why silver rattles would be coming to an end - of course, solvers go straight to the wordplay and don't find flaws in any but extremely unlikely surfaces). This is a straight-forward, relatively easy clue that would be appreciated by solvers as an obvious compound anagram (with the E + SILVER to be anagrammed) and a way into the crossword. Nice one.

<p>6. JN</p>	<p>This is a wonderfully designed adaptation of a Six Dials grid. The grid represents a vital part of the theme. The thematic percentage of cells is judged at a creditable 56%. It is also a first effort at a 3D grid design which has no bearing in the marking but does explain why the designer ran out of time to present the submission fully. Grid letters and word list are clear. There is no numbering, nor clue directions. These are important things in submissions though I have to say they are dwarfed by the brilliance of the concept.</p> <p>The choice of theme is a brave one in some ways, and one which suggests a couple of setters! I don't think we should shy away from such a topic.</p> <p>The designer uses word lengths of 3-6 letters, using reversals to fit everything into the grid and just one snake. There are six bars but these have no effect on the 3D quality and, used in 18-cell circular dials, are making good use of properties of these kind of grids.</p> <p>An appealing feature of the grid is the expansion of dial one with a void at the centre, modelling the 'vital part'. But there is a cost in a large number of three letter words and abbreviations. Some of these are on the edge of obscurity. Another cost is that there is one checking letter out of three. This is very cleverly and nicely offset by the appearance of an 8 letter thematic word in the unchecked letters of the expanded outer ring. This could be clued, or referred to in some way, to provide a second checking letter and solve the problem..</p> <p>Nevertheless, this is an outstanding grid and one we would like to develop and employ in 2019 with some adjustment in dial one. This might be to use a letter in the current void giving four solutions of seven letters instead of the eight solutions of three letters.</p> <p>The pleasing impression of the void in the context of the theme could be given in another way. The letter could be 'invisible'. Why not? The same impression could be by use of overlaid graphics as the designer has done. Better still perhaps, a second grid with end cell which will contain the 'void letter' could be shown about to engage with the first</p> <p>The designer shows qualities of a future champion. With some more time on this design it could have been the winner this year.</p> <p>A bBrilliant concept and one I am very keen to use in 2019.</p> <p>Commended</p>	<p>6. Clue for Joseph Bazalgette: "Oh jeez, get past lab experiments, find a man to fix this great stink." (6,10)</p> <p>Explanation: (OH JEEZ, GET PAST LAB)*</p> <p>VHC* Very Very Highly commended: This clue had us smiling. What an ambitious choice of word to clue and what a highly successful clue. Creating an anagram for that complicated name was a challenge in itself compounded by the need to find a suitable anagram indicator. 'Experiments' appears in none of the 'official' anagrind lists and we are not totally convinced that it is acceptable (Chambers gives 'Trying out new styles or techniques - does that allow shifting round of letters I wonder?') I tried to find a suitable replacement and wondered whether 'malfunctioning' for example, would fit into the fine surface reading of the clue. A wonderful image is evoked by the clue with the instruction to the solver to solve the anagram and find the name of Bazalgette. Editors, always requiring economy, would strike out the article 'a' but would probably be just as delighted with the clue as we were.</p>
------------------	---	--

<div>7. N &SI</div>	<div> <p>This large 9x7x5 rectangular grid is a masterpiece of planning - bold setting-out of long phrases/titles and names with some very difficult words and then weaving intricate threads to complete the grid. Great skill and attention to fine detail is shown, with very little recourse to the obscure. The thematic percentage of 62% is excellent for this size of grid.</p> <p>The presentation of grid and word list, with themed solutions highlighted, was very clear. But the use of a spreadsheet to represent the grid tricks the designer into making the first line of the spreadsheet, the top, back edge of the 3D grid. And then the problem comes in the numbering and 'away' and 'to' directions. The designers sorted this very quickly. This has to be taken into account in the marking.</p> <p>Apart from that error, directions were generally highly accurate following conventions very well even on the most complex of snakes. One error with one largely vertical snake. One solution missing. Such errors are almost inevitable in such a complex grid and can take hours, days of checking before eliminating them completely.</p> <p>The designers use the full range of techniques – blends, overlaps, snakes, reversals - with an admirable range of letter counts in words and phrases. For such a complex grid there are very few bars, which mainly do not affect the 3D quality.</p> <p>[There is a cost in terms of a large number of solutions and use of threads that are already largely formed by other solutions, but which 'mop up' a small number of vacant cells. But that is to look at the grid through the eyes of the puzzle calendar and this is not part of the marking criteria. The considerable overlaps in the weaving can be used to good advantage in reducing 53 clues required for 53 solutions by leaving a number of thematic words unclued, except perhaps referring to them as 'inhabitants' or such like.]</p> <p>There is the excellent prospect of this <i>tour de force</i> making a very fine puzzle. In only their second 3D grid design, the design team show all the qualities of Champions.</p> <p>First submission Highly Commended</p> <p>(Final submission Very Highly Commended)</p> </div>	<div> <p>'A Socialist - Marxist initially - interrupts Communist in the manner of Spanish masterpiece' (3,7)</p> <p>Explanation: ASM (A Socialist - Marxist initially) inside LENIN (Communist) followed by AS (in the manner of).</p> <p>Highly commended: This charade wordplay is effective and leads the solver to the defined words. One might be pedantic and say that there are very many Communists (the solver has, of course initially attempted to make RED fit into his solution) and that possibly 'Communist leader' or 'Communist revolutionary' might be more generous. However, LAS MENINAS appears and clearly, in the context of this compiler's theme, is totally appropriate, though within the surface reading of the clue it reads rather strangely - in which Spanish masterpiece does a Socialist interrupt a Communist? That quibble apart, this is a perfectly functioning clue.</p> </div>
-------------------------	---	--

<div>8. BL</div>	<p>Crystal clear, perfect presentation of a 5x5x5 jigsaw grid with 33% thematic content. A first reaction might be to say that this is on the low side but not so. The terrific achievement in the design is to line up the solutions to give thematic intervening layers as well as the theme being represented cryptically in highlighted cells. And to do so with all words (bar one proper noun) in Chambers, and no reversals, blends, snakes or bars. Just an apparently straightforward grid of stunning simplicity But only when the correct configuration is achieved.</p> <p>This is a most elegant grid that realises an original and wonderful idea.</p> <p>The jigsaw element will make this an intriguing puzzle, particularly if the solver has to find the theme by jig-sawing. That could be a slow burner with a wonderful penny drop.</p> <p>All words are of five letters. In most puzzles this would risk being dull with no variation and no phrases. But not so here. It adds to the number of combinations possible and increases the challenge of finding the correct configuration of the jigsaw to reveal the theme.</p> <p>The designer suggests this might be suitable for an 'Extra' puzzle. It could be a very fine mainstream puzzle, presented in two stages – jigsaw and then fully directed later in the month.</p> <p>[This model submission would make a super exemplar. Files can be imported and sent to setters with few adjustments. Not part of marking criteria except clarity.]</p> <p>Very,(very) Highly Commended</p> <p>VHC*</p>	<p>8. Clue for DEPTH 'It's that extra dimension of wisdom and perceptiveness which makes these crosswords special!' (5)</p> <p>"that extra dimension" refers to DEPTH as the physical dimension which is "extra", as in additional, in 3-D crosswords, "wisdom and perceptiveness" refers to the "wise and perceptive" definition of DEEP, "which makes these crosswords special" again refers to the uniqueness of the crosswords in the 3-D Calendar Puzzle series. The exclamation mark indicates that the clue is not quite a conventional multiple-definition type clue as it basically has two definitions, one of which is in the middle of the other.</p> <p>Highly commended: As part of the 3D compiling team, we can only smile gratefully for the accolade in this clue. We are not sure that the exclamation mark can function as an indicator of a 'not quite conventional' double definition clue. Clearly, including one definition within the other rendered the surface reading smoother but we would suggest that the standard clue order could have been achieved using, say, a semi-colon. Something like 'Extra dimension that makes these crosswords special; the extent of wisdom and perceptiveness'. A nice one anyway.</p>
----------------------	--	--

<div>9. NB</div>	<p>Clear presentation of 7x7x5 grid. The theme is well chosen. Although very well known the designer conceals it cunningly. Discovering it will be a penny dropper.</p> <p>The designer forms a grid containing a creator and some major works. However, these are concealed amongst unrelated words but can be found by word search after solution is complete. Most solvers will realise this before solving all the clues. The discovery will assist the final solves.</p> <p>There have been several grids where highlighted words appear. A nice twist to this is the word-search aspect without highlights.</p> <p>The first name is disguised wonderfully with a designer trademark!</p> <p>Dexterity is shown in 3D techniques -reversals, snakes, some very pleasing blends, particularly where overlaps run in opposing directions. There are four bars three of which affect the 3D quality but only slightly in a large grid.</p> <p>There is a wide variety of word lengths with phrases and a name.</p> <p>Words are in Chambers except for one fairly obscure geographical reference. This can be avoided by a reversal.</p> <p>There has been a small slip during the construction requiring some unpicking and finishing again. This can be done to good advantage.</p> <p>Grid numbering is accurate, as is the calculation of thematic percentage. There are some slips in clue directions and the convention for showing where a solution, or solution section, finishes before the end of a file of cells, is not followed. But it is clear enough.</p> <p>This grid in the RPM Trophy competition comes from a highly skilled designer who also puts heart and soul into a lot of hard work for The Project. The grid is well on the way to being a superb submission. I quite understand the time constraints militating against final adjustments and last layer of polish.</p> <p>This will form a very fine puzzle with a little more juggling with the concealments.</p> <p>Highly Commended.</p>	<div>(No clue from NB - RPM Trophy only)</div>
----------------------	---	--

Final Judgements - 3D Crosswprds World Championship 2017

Hearty congratulations to

1st New World Champion - Keith Williams

2nd in the 3D World -. Ben Lovering (*RPM Trophy Winner)

3rd = in the 3D World. Jos Tait – Alan Goddard – Jack Nichols (*Best Clue)

Hearty congratulations too for all other entrants whose commendable entries came so close to a place.

I will be in touch about a Presentation occasion.

Thank you so much.

Eric Westbrook 3D Crossword Designer *Sirius*