

Summary

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1. April Competition

The April competition with Spike Milligan themed grid by Pickles and clued by Enigmatist, was won by Jos Tait of Preston Australia. Excellent solving!

Feedback included:

Enigmatist is one of my favourite setters and many of the reasons for that can be found in this puzzle: clever and challenging exploitation of an interesting theme; complex, cryptic and misleading clues – for example, it took me a long time to unravel the clue to IRONIC, but it is, as indeed are all his clues, ultimately both intricate and fair. A most enjoyable solve this month. Kmc

One solver is speaking to another :- “Would you like to do this puzzle set by Enigmatist or climb the North face of the Eiger?”

“Wait right there – I'll get the crampons!” GS

Much fun to be had here, as Andre always has a go first. He was amazed when he came to complain that nothing could really contain

Y__G T__G and I immediately burst into song... Quite an education in British culture for him! AR

Thanks again for the great, and consistently entertaining, puzzles. JN

Lovely to have the brilliant madcap humour of Spike Milligan celebrated and brought back to life again in such a clever puzzle. Again I am in awe of how much Enigmatist was able to pack into the grid, and how many references there are, since I imagine the constraints of 3D must be greater than those of 2D.

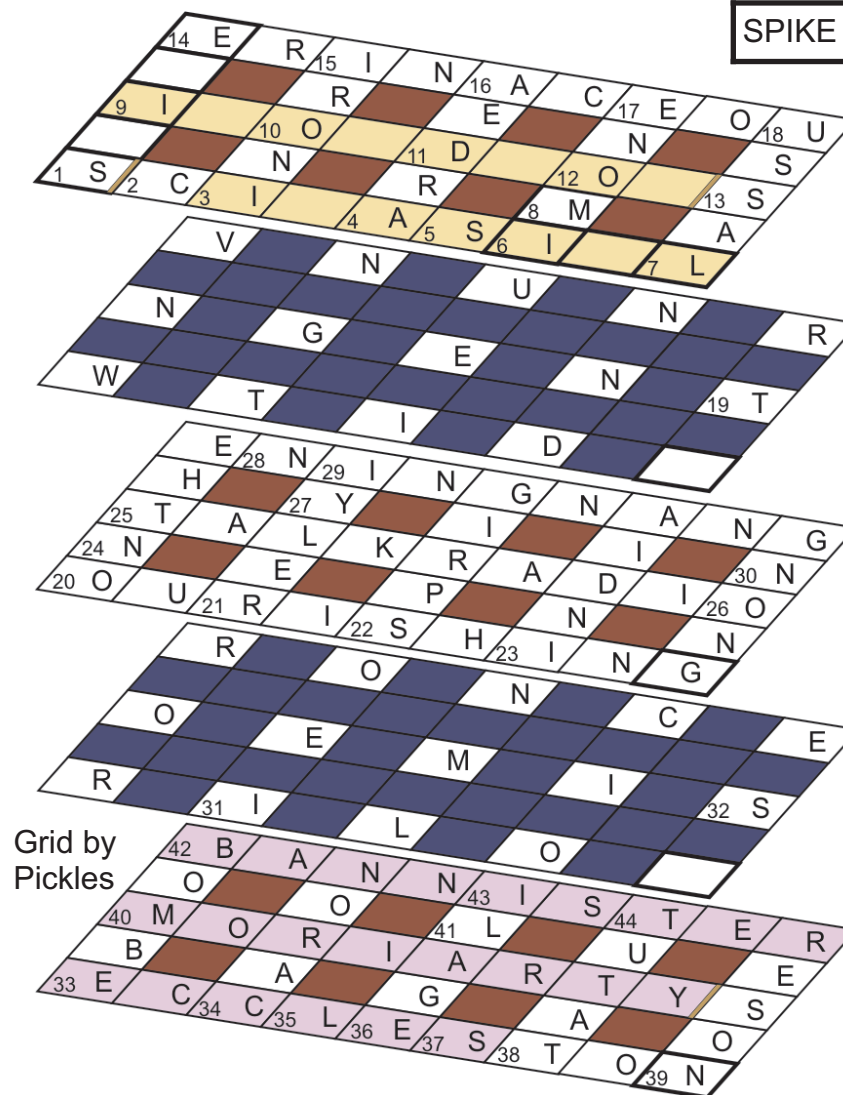
Looking forward to May, and Spring really arriving (as the French say, 'En avril, ne te découvre pas d'un fil, mais en mai tu peux faire ce qu'il te plait!' MS



April 2018 Enigmatist Pickles

I TOLD YOU I WAS ILL

SPIKE MILLIGAN



This was in some ways a typical crossword from a setter who normally sets the sort of challenging crosswords (in the Guardian) that suit my solving ability and style. What added to the challenge this time, apart from the 3D format, was the incorporation of a theme that I did not know much about.

There was one non-themed answer that took many attempts to solve (Day 33), and it was my least favourite clue. There was also one themed answer that held me up a bit (Day 26), but when I eventually found it (I had to look it up) I revisited the clue to see how it worked and thought it was ingenious. 'Intoned' for 'sang song' just makes it, in my view, and the clue as a whole is brilliant.

I did not know the original or the translated phrase for the yellow highlights, but the hint was a good one, and I enjoyed working out and finding the answer.

I enjoyed most of the solving time I put into this, and the clues generally were excellent. I got the theme quite early on, from Day 21 MORIARTY and a couple of other indications. Day 35 was a great clue, and I fortunately knew the themed answer to that.

I admired very much the way the setter incorporated many aspects of the theme in various ways in several clues. Some of the references were lost on me, but I still liked the mental exercise.

I think there were fewer obscure words in this puzzle than in Shark's March puzzle, and I was glad of that. For me, Vlad has set the standard for this year so far, and his was the most interesting theme for me, but I appreciate the variety of themes, setters and grid designs in all the puzzles to date.

Congratulations to Enigmatist and Pickles. AB

Thanks to Piuckles and Enigmatist for taking us back to what used to make us laugh. SC

I was delighted to see that the subject of this month's puzzle was none other than was Spike Milligan, one of my favourite comics, and of course Enigmatist did not fail to please in his rendition of this theme. Many thanks to him. EL

Still stuck on some parsing but thrilled to have completed this. Memories flood back of my father singing 'Ying Tong' round the house! JJ

I was never a fan of Spike Milligan on the Goons, so many references passed me by. PD

O dear, I'm not doing well this year, been struggling with April's puzzle but sadly not completed it. I don't know much about Spike Milligan but spent time looking things up which was good fun!!

My favourite Milligan rhyme so far is -

Said Hamlet to Ophelia
I'll draw a sketch of thee,
What kind of pencil shall I use,
2B or not 2B ? JW

Attached is my goonish attempt at the April puzzle. Many thanks to Nora for reassuring me, in the Newsletter, that a photo was OK.

I have very mixed feelings about this one – a subject about whom I know little (although that little supplied several answers), with clues set by Enigmatist who seems to teach in a school of Sharks.

One clue stands out for me: 35. There are others just as clever but I really liked that one. I was expecting the answer to be in the grid and was looking for the clue to match. It was a lovely construction.

I have the 'musical' answer on a very old vinyl single with 'I'm walking backwards for Christmas' on the flip side.

When things go wrong in our household it is a common saying between Mr. B and I that, 'the wick in the engine's gone out, Min'.JBs

However, having said all that, it was nice and challenging and there were very few "easy" clues, which I applaud. And, most importantly of all, still enjoyable. HE

Still stuck on some parsing but thrilled to have completed this. Memories flood back of my father singing 'Ying Tong' around the house. JJ

I was delighted to see that the subject of this month's puzzle was none other than Spike Milligan, one of my favourite comics. And of course Enigmatist did not fail to please in Many thanks to him. AG

Tough but fun. An impressive number of themed solutions and theme-related clues. Favourite was the topographically cryptic YONG TONG SONG. JT

Timing is important in comedy. I finished this a week ago but this seemed the right day to send it.

Happy Milligan's Day to you. HB

This was so very hard. Enigmatist certainly sets some tricky and mysterious puzzles. Warm regards and thanks, JA

While I heartily applaud the sentiment and regard the Subject as a seminal influence on much of British late 20th Century comedy, the crossword wasn't as satisfying as most. I think the attempt to squeeze so much thematic content into the clues detracted from the quality and Ximeanity.

- 4 (BOMBER) : the "Purple" in the clue was superfluous for a true Ximenean, although I acknowledge its inclusion for thematic reasons
- 6 (CARON) : t'Internet tells me that Caron played "Gigi", but I don't understand the rest of the clue
- 16 (IRISH) : I only got this 'cos **NOURISHING** was already in place - I don't understand the wordplay part of the clue
- 17 (IRONIC) : I don't see a definition in this clue, only two bits of wordplay, the first of which I don't understand
- 24 (OGLER) : I don't understand the wordplay part of the clue
- 33 (TALK RADIO) : the clue should have indicated (4,5) and not (9)
- 29 (SPRIG) : "case of Phantom Raspberry-Blower" was a bit convoluted to indicate PR
- 9 (ECCLESTON) : clueing (Christopher) ECCLESTON via "Who once" - which I read as "he once played Doctor Who" - was a bit esoteric ... but I actually quite liked it !!!
- Too many snakes for my liking. Mind you, if you start with SPIKEMILLIGAN and ONTHENINGNANGNONG and ITOLDYOUIWASILL then you're making a rod for your own back !

Here is my April puzzle, very early as I'm off to Sicily next week and am trying to sort out the important things before I go! I'm sure Sicily will be cooler than London at the moment.

I remember The Goons being on the radio, but still found some of the clues very tricky. The best bit of Spike Milligan for me is always, "I told you I was ill"!

I hope to have the May puzzle sorted out once I'm back on home ground.
DS

I have to say I found it the most difficult so far this year.
Loved the theme.
Good luck to all the entrants! B&SW

A satisfyingly clued puzzle which had us reaching for our childhood comic verse books.

The solving may become more erratic now that it's gardening season again, but we will see if we can manage May at least. JH
We enjoyed it and learnt a lot we didn't know about Spike Milligan. R&FH

All I have for the yellow boxes is I*O*D*O*I*ASILL ... in old something something? So probably technically a fail. But here are the clued answers ... starting with the great SPIKE MILLIGAN. Saw him live once, you know, as Oblomov - played the whole part from his bed. Till next month, PA

This one was a bit of a slog but I think I got there in the end! As usual several answers I am not sure about. GB

This was a tough one, even though I got the theme pretty quickly, it has been a long time since I have read, heard or seen Spike Milligan. He's not even on the radar in the US I'm afraid. I'll also admit I was much more a fan of "I'm Sorry I'll Read That Again" than "The Goon Show", though I did like when Milligan would blurt out the punchline to a dirty joke as a non-sequitur ("you're in the barrel tonight" comes to mind).

There were some nice trips down memory lane though. GH

At the end of March I had one left. Yesterday I had one left! Today hope finished and complete. (I can't justify my answer to 10). ET
I've been enjoying these puzzles but this is the first I have managed to complete, spurred on by the subject. I have fond memories of Spike's work. Some obscure words. Not sure I have got them all right. I look forward to seeing the breakdown.

Many thanks for a brilliant calendar. RS

Attached is my entry for the April competition. Trickier than previous months, as promised, with more abstruse items and a different cluing style.
AC

Thank you very much as ever, and I hope you are well and enjoying our tardy spring. AC

I'm hoping there's no silly transcription error this time, but even triple-checking doesn't always work out for me!

I enjoyed this puzzle so much, and am happy to have completed an Enigmatist. More often than not he defeats me elsewhere, and I definitely didn't complete his 3D December crossword last year. Perhaps this one was easier, or maybe it's down to me being a longtime fan of the subject. Very clever clues indeed. MLJ

We enjoyed this puzzle especially as its theme remembers one of our favourite comedians.

Hope you are all enjoying your spring weather – it's autumn here – a great relief from the heat. T&CH

One of my comedy heroes. Lots of snakes making it more difficult to find the clue you want to answer. 34 I'm assuming the answer is UNGOR from the anagram, otherwise I can't make sense of it. MJ

It is by 'im. The one whose clueing fame precedes him.
So I was not surprised by some of the byzantine wordplay.
Lovely theme - several parts were almost write-ins when I spotted early on that it was about Spike.
The ILL of his (translated) epitaph crossing with MILLIGAN was a nice nice.
As I solved I thought there were many many words I didn't know - looking back I find there were only ARDEA, INION, LASSU, and the sculptor STOSS - and I didn't know a NOSER was a strong wind. Similarly, I thought there were many wordplays I didn't twig - but reviewing I think I now understood them, now I've sussed out the way the clue for TALK RADIO works.
Stay well. AJR

Another amazing compilation with so many clues related to the theme. I think Spike's epitaph is one of the wittiest and most memorable ever! JBn Loved this, quite tough with a few unfamiliar thematic references. Thanks! N&SI

My solution is attached - it was pretty clear who the puzzle was about, and proved to be a worthy tribute to his memory. I liked the ingenious representation of the final entry on the 35th, but there were a few clues I didn't understand, so hope they are all OK - in most cases I got an answer from the definition, but on the 11th, I don't see how the clue works at all, though have only been able to find one word which fits the known letters. Best to you both. PM

This clever puzzle notes the centenary of Spike Milligan's birth!
Once again it was on a subject about which I knew very little, so it was a pleasant learning experience and an enjoyable challenge, very cleverly crafted. SF
I thought it best to get started on Enigmatist as he can be time-consuming. Very entertaining with some of his unique clueing.
Brought back memories of listening to the Goon Show every Thurs night and repeats on Saturdays.
Quotes by Spike were always funny and I especially liked "All Men are Cremated Equal"! PC

April entry attached. An interesting puzzle with some obscure words and tricky clues. I think I might have struggled if I hadn't been a Milligan fan and known the epitaph. I particularly liked the Ecclestone clue. JP

Here is my entry for April. I finished this a couple of weeks ago. As I was typing out the list from my original workings on a copy of the April page, I checked my solutions as usual but there are five I am unsure about, all marked *. These must have made sense at the time I entered them, but not tonight ... so Nora, I can't parse them!
So some of this was difficult, but of course enjoyable ... and I enjoyed getting waylaid by tales about the Goon Show. Thanks to everyone. JR

Spike Milligan came quite quickly as too did many of the answers. A very clever use of so many Milligan references (not all originally known) – like the tablet! DM

While I think about it - can I make a comment about the design of the calendar? I consider my vision to be good but I sometimes struggle to read the print over parts of the drawing on the pages with the clues. If the drawing gets darker or 'fussy' the print tends to disappear. I wonder if anyone else has found this.

Many thanks for all the work you put in to this enterprise. I really look forward to the first of the month so that I can start the next crossword! I haven't submitted any yet because I always seems to have one or two that I can't get. I live in hope! Connie Pullan

Thank you very much Connie for taking the trouble to give that feedback. Clarity is crucial and must take precedence over prettiness. Whilst we look to sort that one out ...

... in extremis you could download the puzzle from the website and then use the zoom on the pdf adobe acrobat to home in on the various pieces of print.

We also have the puzzles on a 3D Blind Crossword program. There is a link just below the image of a Spoonbill with dark glasses on the home page. You can download Sam Twidale's program, 'unzip' it and then run the program. You will have the choice of several puzzles. You will be able to read the clues (if sighted) and also have them read out and spelt if visually impaired.

Thank you very much once again Connie. We need to tone down those background graphics.

2. April 2018 Clues & Explanations

Spike Milligan Centenary 16th April 2018 grid by Pickles

Hello John Thank you so much.

Pickles suggests in his design that SPIKE MILLIGAN and I TOLD YOU I WAS ILL might not be clued but allowed to form in checking letters as the solution proceeds.

Another point to ponder is that this is an April puzzle – a little earlier than usual for solvers to encounter Enigmatist!

	SOLUTION	Directions – Clue – Letter Count	Explanation	Notes
1	AISLE	4d <i>Nothing</i> odd in verse? A silly, silly passage! (5)	(v)E(r)S(e)A(s)I(l)L(y) anag	Ref. S.M.'S <i>Silly Verse for Kids</i>
2	ARDEA	4aw Daymare in <i>The Melting Pot</i> without my birds (5)	ARDEA anag minus MY	S.M.'s TV series
3	BANNISTER	42ac X's "modern" character, note, is engaged in repartee (9)	BAN[N,IS]TER	Minnie BANNISTER (Goons character)
4	BOMBER	42to,33up-2 Sweet occupant of third slot in <i>Purple Aeroplane</i> (6)	BOMBE/R	Ref. S.M.'s skit on "Yellow Submarine"
5	BREVE	42up Note: "Always the essence of ad-libbing" from the floor (5)	B,REVE all rev, middle letter	SM famous for ad-libbing
6	CARON	34aw Gigi read about retreat of X's unit (5)	(Leslie) C[AR]ON rev	SM in Royal Artillery
7	CITRIC	2ac-2,3d Gutlessly quote Mr Sykes as "fruity" (6)	CIT(e, E)RIC	SM co-wrote with Eric Sykes
8	DERMA	11d Lieder Macca's penned undercover? (5)	DERMA hidden	S.M. & Paul McCartney good pals (Macca wrote poem The Poet of Dumbwona's Lane for him)
9	ECCLESTON	33ac Who once an X character described as "mad" (as a "fruitcake") - not retracted (9)	(Mad Dan) ECCLES, TON rev; not really a cake, hence	Ref. ECCLES (Goons character)

10	ENACT	17d Order from Sections 3-7 in Monte Cassino to execute (5)	ENACT anag of moNTE CAssino	S.M. injured at Battle here
11	ERINACEOUS	14ac,18to-2 Say Spiny Norman's one of us after X's fatherland snubbed fellow (10)	ERIN, ACE, O(f) US	ERIN = Ireland (S.M. was IRISH); obligatory ref to Monty Python
12	IDIOT	6d Weekly Goon from Show discovered in Oz, initially smashing it (5)	I[D,I,O]T	<i>The IDIOT Weekly</i> S.M.'s Australian RADIO series
13	INDIA	23aw Main diagram depicting location of Ahmednagar and Pune (5)	INDIA hidden	S.M.born in Ahmednagar, raised in Pune, INDIA
14	INION	15d Only Mussol <i>rising</i> , I project? (5)	INI- ON all rev	S.M. book: <i>Mussolini: His Part in My Downfall</i>
15	INTOMB	9d,40to-2 Enthusiastic about getting tips from Major Bloodnok on old sepulchre (6)	INTO, MB first letters	Major Bloodnok, Goons character
16	IRISH	31up-2,21ac-4 Q/? Fiver? No show for X and his Crazy People (5)	(q)I (five)R, ISH anag	Ref Q5, the first of the "Q" shows; <i>Crazy People</i> , original title of <i>The Goon Show</i>
17	IRONIC	15to,3ba-2 My wife's second nursing home going over to Rye, we're told? (6)	I, RO[NI]C all rev; i.e. wry COR! = MY, I = wlfe's second; nursing = vb	S.M. lived in Rye
	I TOLD YOU I WAS ILL	9ac-8,3ac X: fatal decision, not to listen (1,4,3,1,3,3)	I TOLD YOU I WAS ILL	S.M.'s epitaph (English translation) Up to you whether you leave clue in!

18	LASSU	7aw Clouseau's read about Goon movement in Ballroom (5)	L[ASS]U	Ref Goons, Sellers character & <i>Cluedo</i>
19	LEGALIST	35ac-2,36aw,43ac-3 I know the law on celebs (8)	LEG, A-LIST	The sort of thing he'd say – and he often appeared as a copper
20	LINGUA	41aw,43up Language of letters written in full in <i>Guardian</i> (6)	LINGUA hidden	SM used to have letters published in Guardian
21	MORIARTY	40ac-8 Gallery-goers are after pollsters for X's titled character (8)	MORI/ARTY	Count MORIARTY (Goons character) <i>Bar? Could be unclued?</i>
22	NOSER	39aw Large wind section stops endless cornet playing (5)	NO[S]ER anag (c)ORNE(t)	S.M.'s first instrument
23	NOURISHING	24to,20ac Like good food to cook or his Gunn to <i>Treasure Island</i> ? (10)	NOUR[I]SHING anag	Ref. S.M. role of Ben Gunn
24	OGLER	10d He looks dubiously round for X, Little Groveller initially upset his mum (5)	O/GL/ER first letters rev	SM called Prince Charles a "Grovelling Little Bastard"
25	ON-DIT	12d Part of <i>Puckoon</i> ditched, it's rumoured (5)	ON-DIT hidden	Ref. S.M.'s novel
26	ON THE NING NANG NONG	20aw,28ac,30to A piece by X flying , intoned with different points of departure (2,3,4,4,4)	ON THE (w)N/ING, (s)N/ANG (s)N/ONG	S.M.'s famous poem
27	RELYING	21aw,29ac-3 Dependent on telling stories (7)	RE, LYING	As he was, on stage and in books
28	SIMONE	5ac-2,6aw Woman is Walking Backwards on motorway (6)	SI/M ONE rev	Ref "Walking Backwards for Christmas", Goons hit
	SPIKE MILLIGAN	1aw,8to,6ac,7d X (5,8)		The man himself. Unclued?
29	SPRIG	22aw Embroider signature gripping case of Phantom Raspberry-Blower (5)	S[PR]IG.	S.M. wrote "The Phantom Raspberry-Blower of Old London Town" for <i>The Two Ronnies</i>

30	STATUTE	37ac-2,38aw,44ac-2 Sculpture outlining the first - and last - character from the great act (7)	STATU[T]E	SM the first-born and last-surviving of The Goons
31	STOSS	13d He sculpted heads, from Secombe to our Spike and Sellers... (5)	(Viet) STOS & S first letters	Goons 1-3... NOTE!!! Might need a cross-reference to SPIKE if we're splitting S&M in the puzzle – so replace SPIKE with its number (it doesn't have a number at the mo).
32	SWORE	1d ... cursed Bentine finally lines up (5)	SWOR/E all rev	Goon 4
33	TALK RADIO	25ac He's left this station broadcasting Adolf Hitler takes (4,5)	TALK RADIO anag	Ref. <i>Adolf Hitler: My Part in His Downfall</i>
34	URGER	18d He'd egg on Rommel's face after poor nameless gunner (5)	URGE/R anag minus Ns	Ref. "Rommel?" "Gunner Who?"
35	YING TONG SONG	27aw,29ac-3,19d-2,26aw,32up-2,26to GYT GGG – a work of X G (4,4,4) OR 26aw!	Y in GT ON Gs ON G	S.M.'s famous song

3. Presentations 2017



Keith Williams BBC CiNA 3D Crosswords World Champion 2017 presented with the trophy "It's not a piece of cake" by Sirius



Ben Lovering (right) presented with RPM Trophy keepsake by Sirius

3. Presentations 2017

It was a great pleasure to lunch with ace grid designers and clue setters, Keith Williams and Ben Lovering, along with Ben's mother and photographer, Sharyn Lovering.

Keith was presented with the 'It's not a Piece of Cake' trophy as the new BBC Children in Need Appeal 3D Crosswords World Champion 2017 for his grid and clue, both of which were judged Very Highly Commended.

Ben Lovering, winner of the Ray Parry-Morris Trophy for designing the Best 3D Grid, was presented with a RPM Trophy keepsake, an inscribed server and knife. This to go with Ben's two salvers from previous World Championship wins. Look out for Ben's grid in the June Extra 2018.

There is no photograph of The Ray Parry-Morris Trophy. This still only exists in the imaginary Sirius world. Further ideas were broached. Sirius will attend to this when health improves. Maybe a competition.

Sirius, thanked Keith and Ben very warmly for their terrific contributions to the 3D project, both as outstanding solvers and contributors to puzzle calendars with wonderful grids and clues, and as pizzle testers and advisers.

There was discussion on how we might celebrate next year being the tenth year as a BBC CiNA Project. This might include another international cup competition with clues from a range of setters.

When asked for tips on how to win The Championship, the combined advice from the two, two-time word champions was to choose a theme carefully and to be prepared to give up on an idea when it did not work out. Move to another theme idea.

A good theme was one which brought a large number of words to mind with possibilities for lateral associations. **The grid was the key** (and key to a cracking puzzle) and then choice of a solution to clue.

Sirius added a qualification that this was surely true in the present company but could think of some super-solvers who were brilliant at 3D grid design but found cluing more variable. There could be an argument to settle on a fabulous clue and then build a grid around it. There was some discussion of weighting given to the two components of the tie-break task.

4. And the winner is...

One of the many pleasures in our project is to contact winners of the competitions to tell of their success and invite them to say what they would like as their prize. In the first instance we offer the latest Chambers Standard Reference Dictionary, our reference source, but if the winning solver has this essential volume we invite them to nominate another reference book at a similar price. Such an email exchange led to the following:

DON'T PANIC! - this is worth hitching a ride around the galaxy. Zaphod Beeblebrox is chortling - Marvin's brain is shrinking to moon-size - Slartibartfast is creating new fjords and I'm booking a table at that restaurant. The mice win.

What can one say? My guffaw reached across the kitchen, down the garden and is now on its way to the south coast.

I'll have to get back to you about the reference book. I'm still thoroughly enjoying the atlas and although my Chambers has now parted company with its spine it serves its purpose especially after the fiasco of the first publishing of the new edition. I think the Chambers Thesaurus was a bit weak so I'll probably research others.

By the way, the answer is 6 x 9. :)

All the best and thank you from number 19 - again.

Jan
xxx

5. May Extra

A May Extra by Bozzius will be posted md-month.

Finally and most of all, thank you for supporting our project to help youngsters in need.

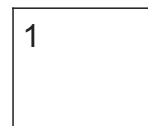
Best wishes Eric Westbrook

Registered Blind RNIB Membe
& Public Speaker

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

6. Spike Milligan Crossword

I am grateful to Tony Harker for sending in a rare, fiendish crossword by S. Milligan. I am often conscious that solvers send me a crossword with some deluded idea that I can untangle the knottest Gordius knot in a flash. If truth be known I am still struggling with the Andy Pandy wordsearch 1953.



Across

1. Indefinite article (1)

Down

1. First letter of the alphabet (1)

Hello again Tony,

Thank you for your April solution, feedback and SM crossword.

This last has taxed me in trying to solve it in a Spike Milligan spirit.

I have an indefinite article which could be an anorak or an aquatic apron. And it tickles. It's a good job that there is room for only one letter . The common letter has to be 'A'.

Getting one down is a problem. There was much of course that depressed Spike.

Gottit!

The betting shop's favourite alpha-bet must have been Arkle, Irish of course - BallymacolStud - and probably ridden by Lord Lucan. The choice of 'A' or 'L' has to be decided by checking letters.

So I am coming down 60% on 'A' and will hop for the best.

Good luck for the draw!

Best wishes,

PS The genius of Milligan is evident here in leaving the door open for a third dimension, and a fourth, etc.

