

3D Crossword February 2020 Newsletter 2

This edition covers the following items:

Winners

Welcome

Review of the January 3D Crossword

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Hints & Tips

Championship Judgements

Winners

The winner of the January crossword is Sarah Baylis from Leicestershire. Congratulations Sarah.

2019 World Championship Winner, winning the "It's not a piece of cake" trophy for the second year running are Nick & Sarah Inglis. Congratulations Nick & Sarah.

2019 RPM45 Trophy Winner, winning with his very first 3D grid, is Puck, who we know from his clever clue setting. Congratulations Puck.

For those of you interested, the judges' comments on the World Championship and RPM45 Trophy entries are at the end of this newsletter. We had an extremely high standard of entrants creating fascinating and intricate grids and highly entertaining and erudite clues, which thoroughly taxed the judges.

Welcome

A warm welcome to any new solvers who have just joined the 3D fraternity. Whilst our prime objective is to make a worthwhile contribution to our two charities, the RNIB and the BBC Children in Need appeal, we aim as well to provide really good entertainment through the promotion of three dimensional crosswords to as wide an audience as we can. This we do through the 12 monthly puzzles in the Calendar you have in front of you and/or through our website <http://www.calendarpuzzles.co.uk/>

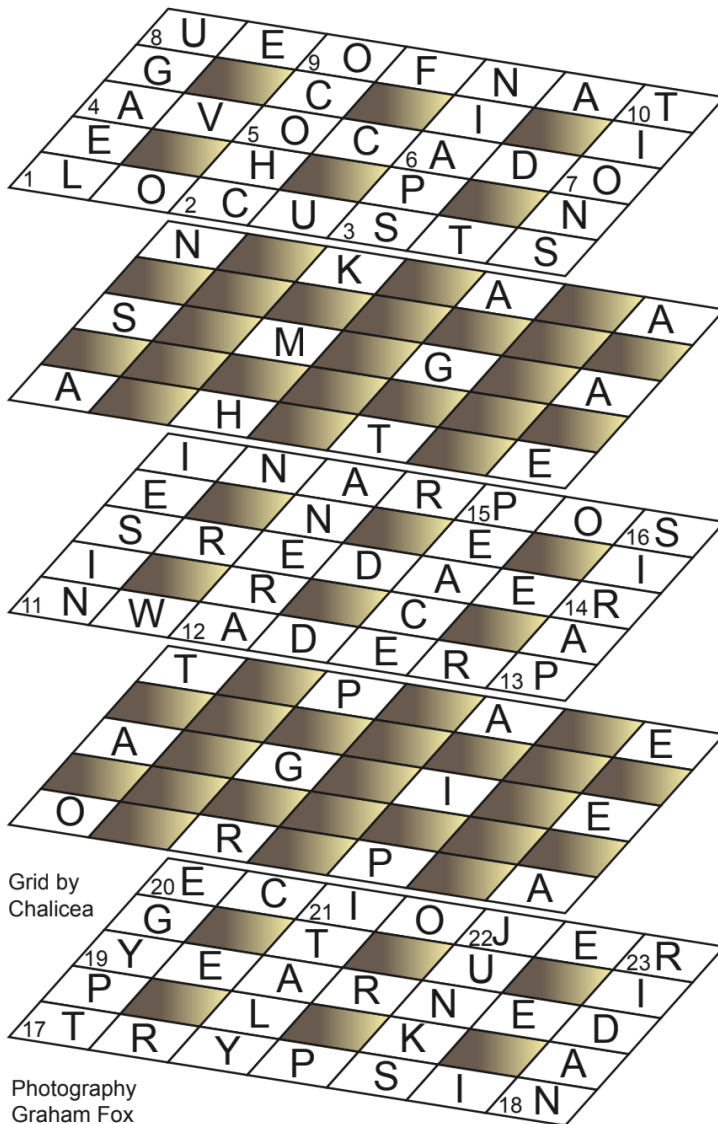
Our regular solvers will know that we start off the year with a relatively straightforward crossword. As the year progresses we gradually ramp up the level of difficulty so that by the autumn the crosswords are a real test for solvers. This helps solvers new to 3D crosswords have the opportunity of familiarising themselves with the format before scaling the peaks. The overall standard set is aimed at the level of the serious national newspaper's tougher cryptic puzzles.

Curmudgeon, who designed (as Chalice another of her crossword allonyms) and set January's puzzle, is a regular with us. The rubric said Celebrating the 1aw, 8ac, 10to founded 100 years ago as a result of the 13aw, 15to conference. Among others, 3aw, 20to, 21to and 22up agreed to 8d for 15to.

On the face of it no hidden difficulties and, since each of the rubric indicators is clued in its own right, straightforward solving it is. But first maybe its worth a long careful look at Day 11. Clearly the crux and clued both normally and with a picture frieze. The picture hints at LE as the start and possibly S to finish. No idea who the footballer is and the meaning of

the chap on the coin is too obscure for me at this stage. Taking instead the word clue we evidently have an anagram and with LE to start and a bit of pondering LEAGUE OF NATIONS leaps out. A quick check on the internet confirms the anniversary. Its not often that the first clue solved is also the key to the puzzle. Excellent.

The puzzle solves fairly readily and the year is off to a pleasing start.



Grid by
Chalicea

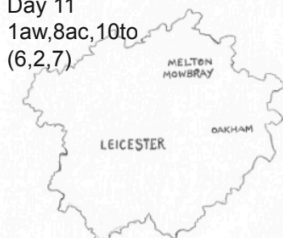
Photography
Graham Fox



Curmudgeon Chalicea

The League of Nations was founded in January 1920 as a result of the Paris Peace Conference. The aim was to unite for world peace and four of the participating countries are included in the grid.

Day 11
1ac, 8ac, 10to
(6,2,7)



Drawing by Frank Paul



LEAGUE OF NATIONS

LE (postcode for Leicester) +
AGUE(R)O (footballer Sergio Agüero
minus R for river - note logo on shirt) +
FNATI (dizzy (i.e. anagram of) faint) +
ON (i.e. on top of)
S (shilling)

January 3D crossword, Clues and Explanations

The crossword celebrates the 1aw, 8ac, 10to, founded 100 years ago as a result of the 13aw, 15to conference. Among others, 3aw, 20to, 21to and 22up agreed to 8d for 15to.

| | Solution | Direction Clue | Explanation |
|----|-------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | Again | 6 d Absolute profit once more (5) | A + GAIN |
| 2 | Arena | 12 aw Region surrounding new sphere of action (5) | AREA round N |
| 3 | Assay | 4 d Test stupid person indeed (5) | ASS + AY |
| | Avocado | 4ac Fruit of fuss about unfinished oral (7) | ADO round vocal |
| 5 | Chary | 2d Cautious of almsgiving without personal magnetism (5) | CHARITY less IT |
| 6 | Choco | 2aw WWII Australian soldier's hospital in couple of small companies (5) | CO + CO round H |
| 7 | Egypt | 20to Country for example finally happy with Pacific Time (5) | EG + (happ)Y + PT |
| 8 | Italy | 21to Country's ability regularly pursuing infotech (5) | IT + A(bi)L(it)Y |
| 9 | Japan | 22up Country's card game a judge overturned (5) | NAP + A + J< |
| 10 | Junks | 22to Treats as rubbish East Asian vessels (5) | Double definition |
| 11 | League of Nations | 1aw(5),8ac, (7),10to(5) A felonious agent troubled an international organisation (6,2,7) | {A FELONIOUS AGENT}* |
| 12 | Locusts | 1ac Place with hollowed out trees for devastating insects (7) | LOCUS + T(ree)S |
| 13 | Nadir | 18aw Lowest point of swirling drain (5) | DRAIN* |
| 14 | Napes | 18up Scruffs of northern primates (5) | |
| 15 | Nisei | 11aw Second generation American consciously envied now and then (5) | (co)N(sc)I(ou)S(ly)E (nv)I(ed) |
| 16 | Oared | 7d Rowed regularly in cool water every day (5) | (co)O(lw)A(te)R(ev) E(ry)D(ay) |
| 17 | Okapi | 9d African animal in confusion chasing round Scottish bird (5) | O + KA + PI |

| | | | |
|----|---------|---|---------------------------|
| 18 | Omega | 5d Part of home game's conclusion (5) | Hidden |
| 19 | Paris | 13aw City of Helen's lover (5) | Double definition |
| 20 | Peace | 15ba Energy in step for ease of mind (5) | PACE round E |
| 21 | Predawn | 13ba Before sunrise perhaps at first wander around (7) | P(erhaps) + WANDER* |
| 22 | Readers | 14ba Including Dutch and English sets up proof correctors (7) | REARS round D + E |
| 23 | Rejoice | 23ba Exult in peculiar trajectories with no complicated start (7) | TRAJECTORIES* less START* |
| 24 | Soprani | 16ba Very quiet queen's treble singers (7) | SO + P + RANI |
| 25 | Spain | 3aw Heated pool in Mediterranean country (5) | SPA + IN |
| 26 | Steps | 3d Footprints of faltering pests (5) | PESTS* |
| 27 | Taser | 10d Stunner took examination again on the rebound (5) | RESAT< |
| 28 | Tonal | 17up Some of Walton always according to key (5) | Hidden |
| 29 | Trypsin | 17ac Clumsy decryptions lacking rectified code for enzyme (7) | DECRYPTIONS* less CODE* |
| 30 | Unite | 8d Join NZ pick-up truck going round Northern Ireland (5) | UTE round NI |
| 31 | Yearned | 19ac Longed for twelve months with young hooligan (7) | YEAR + NED |

Editors Note: The next two or three editions of the newsletter for 2020 will be shortened editions concentrating on puzzle solutions. The editor is away on an extended break to Australia.

January Solver's Comments

Curmudgeon gets the 2020 3D Calendar ball rolling with a nice and easy does it crossword! Many thanks.

Wishing you and Eric etc all the very best for 2020 and more power to all the elbows of the 3D Crossword fraternity. PC

A very happy new year to you and everyone aboard the 3D Special!

An easy start to the year! JM

As an introductory puzzle for solvers new to the 3D format this was very appropriate. All six directions were used in the clues, but only one solution turned corners, and that was the key thematic one.

The level of challenge was decidedly low, but this was a well-designed puzzle with a worthy and neatly executed theme. ABe

As a member of the Australian Crossword Club, it is a pleasure to take part in this. Thank you! MR

Happy New Year. A great start! RE

Quite an easy start to the year, but with mind still trying to wake up after the festive season, that's just as well.

Happy New Year to all involved with the 3D crosswords. AH

A gentle start for January. MJ

A 31-day puzzle for a 31-day month! That doesn't happen often - congratulations to Chalicea. A poignant survey of an institution that broke apart under the strain of populism and its uglier offshoots. No possible present-day parallels there then. New word: CHOCO, at least with this meaning. Old word, only ever used (by me) when solving crosswords: NISEI.

Rebus: LE (Leicester postcode area) + AGUERO - RO (not entirely sure why the crossed-out badge signifies this) + OF NATI (beats me) + ON S(hilling)

A special thank you to the 3D team for arranging a print version this year. I did start last year with print-outs, but never had my heart in it in the same way as I do with a proper robust printed calendar. PA

A lovely gentle start to 2020. Thanks to everybody.

New words for me: CHOCO, NISEI, TRYPSIN and I still can't parse OKAPI! JJ

A lovely start to what I hope will be a Happy and Healthy New Year. SW

Lovely clue for the main theme (day 11) and nice unusual trick used in days 15/16. Thanks for this! N&SI

A very gentle start! Got about half to two-thirds on the first reading, and most of the rest on the second. That's not to say I didn't enjoy it! Favourite clue: SPAIN. HS

My first, many thanks. You are easier than the Crossword Club! But I'm afraid I don't understand the extra picture clue. EF

Very enjoyable, gentle and relaxing. ET

This is my first ever 3D crossword and I loved it! I was of course daunted by the format but found all the introductory words very clear and helpful. I'm sure they will get harder as we go through the year but this was a perfect one to start with - good surfaces and all very fair. Thank you! BS

I enjoy these user-friendly puzzles. BB

Happy 2020! Here is my first puzzle for the year.

Kind regards for a happy, healthy and prosperous year to you and all involved with the wonderful Calendar Puzzles. DS

A straightforward but satisfying puzzle. I especially liked the fine collection of 5-letter countries. We couldn't parse okapi, though, so here's hoping that is correct. JH

Having a tangible calendar improves everything by 2000%. Thank you for all your continuing work.

A nice comfortable start to the year.; a pity the thematic organisation didn't have the success I am going to have! Nothing like a bit of hubris: see other late January 2020 events. AC

My first entry for a long time...New Year's Resolution was to get back into crosswords. A lovely puzzle which I didn't need the tips for but did need a bit of online research (so therefore a good puzzle to start me back again). I got the topic fairly quickly although I still have no idea how the picture clue works although I'm intrigued to see Leicester featuring in it as I have just moved to the area. I also couldn't work out the cryptic part of days 9, 17 and 22 so am eagerly awaiting the solutions. SB

Thanks for the gentle intro to 2020. DM

A nice one to ease into the year, and hopefully a sign that I will at least get into the running for this year's tie break! Here's hoping I can keep the pace up. The only one where I'm not sure of the full reasoning is 9d aside from KA for the Scottish bird. JN

I found this an interesting, fairly gentle start to the year until I came to 9d. The answer had to be 'okapi', but how to explain the clue? I did my usual - leave it for a while, then sneak up on it and eureka! The circle, the Scottish jackdaw and the printer's confusedly mixed type. JP

A pleasant solve without too much trickiness to start the year, although I strained to dredge 'choco' from the back of my mind. Nice to see alternate letter clues that weren't every other letter for a change. Frank Paul's drawing was tough, but my interpretation is LE (postal district) + AGUE[R]O (river on badge crossed out!) + anagram (out/unconscious) of FANTI (Ghanaian) + ON S (on shilling). If only half of that is right I'll be happy! ML-J

Please find our entry for the January 2020 puzzle. This our first one & we enjoyed it immensely. JM

An enjoyable puzzle with a League of Nations theme and some nice clues for country names. 2020 is off to a good start. JB

An enjoyable solve. RC

A nice gentle start to the year, despite a few tricky answers! SB

I completed it ages ago and now can't remember how long it took me. As far as I can recall it was fairly straightforward and a good start to the year. PD

Our first ever 3D crossword and a very enjoyable introduction it was too. Nothing curmudgeonly about Curmudgeon's clues. CW

Great puzzle for my first 3D. Thanks to Curmudgeon. IL

My first 3D crossword - most enjoyable, thank you! AM

Enjoyed very much. Thanks for these great puzzles! HJ

A massive thanks to everyone involved. JA

Good to finish a fairly easy puzzle with interesting reminder of anniversary. Not sure if I have got 9d right and I did not work out the wordplay. Best wishes to Eric for his health and all for producing the calendar. NC

Celebrating the League of Nations founded 100 years ago as a result of the Spain peace conference. Among others, Spain Egypt and Japan agreed to unite for peace. CH

No difficulty in doing it, but I'm almost completely baffled by Frank Paul's drawing apart from ON S(hilling) at the end. PM

It's great to be back after a year off doing them. Looking forward to doing every month this time. Thanks, TC

May I begin my comments by thanking everyone who has come together to keep the series going – I cannot tell you how much pleasure the calendar and the puzzles give me. If Eric does read these comments, may I wish him a swift and complete recovery.

This was the perfect start to the year in many ways - a very accessible introduction to 3D puzzles for any new solvers: a very neat and well-constructed grid with no snakes, very sound clueing, a straightforward theme and enough thematic material to keep the interest from start to finish.

So, thanks again and I look forward to another year's solving. KMcD

Hints & Tips are sent out mid-month to those who ask for them. If you want to be on the list just email us at sirius@calendarpuzzles.co.uk. Here are January's:

2020-1 Hints & Tips January 2020 Curmudgeon

This is a great start to the year by a setter who has produced complete 3D puzzles since the start of the project. I first met Shirley Curran in the company of Enigmatist in one of his London 'offices'. She was very interested to look at a computer program that allows a blind person to access crosswords independently. She also agreed immediately to take part in the 3D project. Shirley is an absolute Tigger". She has espoused the causes supported by spreading the word with enthusiasm, spotting issues we need to address, designing grids, setting clues, judging championship clue entries and a thousand other things with incredible energy. Fantastic!

You will find a number of abbreviations, characteristic of Curmudgeon crosswords. These are the solvers friend! An absolute godsend when one gets stuck. The only problem is that either you know them, sort of know them or have no idea. From the setter's point of view, they are pretty useful in a tight spot. You can find lists online but a standard source used by setters and many crossword editors is **Chambers XWD: A Dictionary of Crossword Abbreviations**.

Day 1 6d **Absolute profit once more (5)**

Like most clues there are two parts – definition and wordplay. In a quick crossword there is usually only a definition and maybe several possible solutions that you juggle, keeping them all in the air until it all gels and solutions fit together. In a cryptic clue the wordplay pins down precisely which of the possible solutions is the correct one.

The definition is usually at the beginning or at the end. If it is within the clue there is usually an indication. Curmudgeon's definitions here are straightforward and similar to those found in dictionaries.

Clues are arranged in alphabetical order of their solutions. There is a good chance the solution begins with A or B or

'Absolute' can be represented by the abbreviation 'A'. If that is the case, the definition is at the end of the clue, perhaps 'more' or 'once more'. That's probably enough to get the answer. And if the four letter word added to the 'A' equates to 'profit', you've got it!

Now you may have three letters which cross-check with other solutions. In a flat 2D crossword (remember those funny things??!!) there might be three solutions crossing your answer to the Day 1 clue. In this 3D crossword there are many more intersecting words. As Araucaria pointed out in the foreword to our website, this takes a little while to get used to, but actually it makes the puzzle easier to complete. You will find in the later puzzles the setter takes advantage of this by writing more imaginative clues, more fun to be had.

In Level 1 Day 4 4ac, and Day 25 3aw,

In Level 3 Day 20 15to, and Day22 14ba,

In Level 5 Day 31 19ac, and Day 10 22 to

Thus, the three cross-checking letters of the Day 1 solution help to solve six other clues. Once you get going, the solve will accelerate until you transform into a shaft of cryptic light like Jonathan Livingston Saegull ... that is until you get shafted by some crafty cryptic Curmudgeon clue. Of course, the pennies will drop eventually because the perfect crossword engages us in the struggle but eventually yields to our satisfaction.

Some solvers follow the day number in the calendar solving clues where they can. Others solve clues and then look for useful cross-checking letters to guide them to clues where letters have been discovered. With a little practice you will learn to do this easily.

Remember that the Day Number just refers to which day of the month the clue appears. It is the second part, the number and direction ac, aw, d that tells you where in the grid the answer goes.

Day 4 4ac **Fruit of fuss about unfinished oral (7)**

Curmudgeon's wordplay is almost always scrupulously fair. Her clues are crystal clear .. after you have solved them! Strictly speaking every word in a clue should count and not be surplus to requirements.

'about' crops up in crosswords a lot because it fits into sentences so well, and because it has a variety of meanings. It can indicate an abbreviation such as C, ca, re. It can indicate a reversal like a boat 'coming about'. It can indicate more turmoil than that, suggesting that a word is used to form an anagram. And it can indicate that a word is to be placed around something else as you might place a coat about your shoulders.

In this clue 'about' indicates a word going either side of another word that means 'fuss'. The word that goes round is actually missing its last letter (indicated by the 'almost'). The complete word means 'oral' in the sense of an adjective. In the surface of the clue, 'oral' is a noun. This always gets me! Every time!

Like most clues you might look at the definition and make a guess which you check by seeing if the wordplay justifies your choice. Or you might use the wordplay to construct the answer and see if it fits the definition. Either way I am very fond of them when fully ripe and accompanied by prawns and dressing.

Days 7,8,9

These clues have something in common! I wonder if this is theme connected???

Day 7 You have already spotted the definition. 'finally happy' in the wordplay indicates the last letter of 'happy'. The letter fits between two abbreviations

Day 8 21to

Country's ability regularly pursuing infotech (5)

The word 'regularly' in 'ability regularly' is telling us to extract letters from 'ability' but in a regular way. It might be evenly, oddly etc. Here it means every third letter starting with the first. 'pursuing' means that the three letters follow something. The something at the start of the answer is an abbreviation for 'infotech'.

Day 16 employs a similar technique, this time starting at the third letter.

Day 11 1aw,8ac,10to

A felonious agent troubled an international organisation (6,2,7)

'troubled' is an anagram indicator telling us to take the letters of (A felonious agent)*, mix them up to form an anagram which gives us the theme of the puzzle.

All the other solutions are either of five or seven letters. Their directions are reasonably straightforward being across, away, and down, or their reversals. However, this Day 11 solution changes direction as it is spelled out in the grid. It's referred to as a snake.

Day 21 13ba Before sunrise perhaps at first wander around (7)

'perhaps at first' indicates one letter. 'wander around' contains anagram indicator previously discussed. Using it will provide the next six letters for 'Before sunrise'.

29 17ac **Clumsy decryptions lacking rectified code for enzyme (7)**

'Clumsy is an anagram signal. But what is to be anagrammed? 'decryptions' is the subject of the signal but is too long to fit the 7 letters. We are told to subtract the letters of 'code'. Curmudgeon observes crossword etiquette in putting 'rectified' before the word 'code'. She does this because the letters of 'code' are not in the same order as in 'decrypting'.

This fine point is not always followed by some GU setters.

31 19ac **Longed for twelve months with young hooligan (7)**

'Longed for' is the definition. I think you will get a word for twelve months! Noting the past tense of the definition and the word length required, you will be able to finish the solution. But did you know this three letter word for 'young hooligan?' I'm not sure that I would if I did not set or solve crosswords. Fortunately there is a fabulous tome called Chambers Crossword Dictionary!

One further tip. It can be very worthwhile to look at the solutions for puzzles you have attempted and not completed. The next step is to work out how the clues can be solved to reach their answers. In our 3D project we put all this together in the monthly newsletters. Clues and Explanations for this January crossword will appear in the February newsletter. Well worth reading.

If you have reached this far, well done!! I hope it has been useful and that you are romping on to the end of the solution with a smile of satisfaction and looking forward to February.

Happy solving.

Sirius

CHAMPIONSHIP JUDGEMENTS

(Apologies for some fragmented editing caused by the constraints of pasting documents done in one format into another with a different format.)

3D 2019 World Championship

The tie-break task was to write a clue for **SWEET FANNY ADAMS**.

Criteria given for judging were precision, concision and wit. The clue should be solvable and fair. If a clue encourages the solver to go outside and kick the wheelie bin, then so much the better. There was a suggestion that the 3D format with its extra 'cross-overs' and hence more checking letters, offers some extra licence for the imagination to take flight

The challenge contains hidden traps, one of which is to decide whether or not to clue the second word. Caution suggests avoiding it. One seeks to amuse but not to offend. However, if there is a way to make oblique reference to a double entendre, there is a reservoir of explosive laughter that might be tapped. The tapped will see it and chortle. The

untapped will sail happily on. Araucaria just wouldn't. Puck, Tramp and Paul etc are masters of this delicate art.

How difficult should this clue be? No guidance is given but the setter might consider that a fifteen letter solution might yield eight checking letters, which in 3D could mean sixteen other solutions assisted. At the beginning of the crossword solving SFA might give too much help? Maybe the setter should seize the opportunity to make this clue more elusive and come as a shuddering climactic penny-dropper near the end?

Some setters will produce a brilliant idea and write a fabulous clue in a flash. Some setters like Arachne do this all the time, but then take the gem and polish and polish and polish it to produce glorious surfaces so smooth and entertaining, that it is very difficult to find the end of the cellotape to unravel it.

Sweet FA is usually used light-heartedly, often where the 'F' denotes a four letter word. It usually raises a smile in polite circles. But there is a dark history too. Will the setters unearth it or leave it buried?

Fanny Adams was an eight year old girl brutally abused and murdered in 1867, over one hundred and fifty years ago. Her body was cut into small pieces, not all of which were found. Sailors fed on a new tinned mutton stew nicknamed it Fanny Adams in appropriately appalling taste. The name caught on in other services. Different times. Harsh lives in the services, many sailors and soldiers hardened to butchery. I was unaware of the history when setting the task. A hidden trap for me.

After checking with crossword conventions that the clue is fair and seeing how the setter has constructed wordplay and provided a definition if applicable, there remains a subjective judgement.

Phrases often lend themselves to setting an anagram. The task then is to construct something meaningful and even better if related to the solution or theme. Good anagrams flow nicely and are not clunky 'giveaways'. The anagram signal is best when disguised, and not run of the mill, yet still fair. If the anagram is funny that's even better. The setter might get close to something hilarious if only a letter was omitted or included.

Clues using first letters can always release the setter from a jam. It's often possible to produce something thematic or amusing. Fifteen letters here is on the long side. It's difficult to disguise such a clue. Reversals give the solver more of a challenge. Such clues can be life-savers when it seems impossible to get into a puzzle.

Charade clues are popular with solvers. Parts of the solution are taken in turn for cluing and somehow a surface meaning is formed. This is not easy when a phrase is to be clued. To do so with meaning and humour is very satisfactory. To do so with three words is a triumph.

Crafty and devious setters will use a variety of cluing techniques within the one clue and be constantly introducing creative ideas. We have plenty of those this year which makes the judging a pleasure.

Thank you everyone for taking part in this bit of fun after the marathon of the 3D year.

Can you imagine poor old Eliud Kipchoge after a stupendous 2 hours 1 minute and 39 seconds, world record marathon, waiting at the finishing tape, bent over in agony, gasping for air. Larry Vinegar steps forward to say:

“Nice run Mr Kipchoge! Now ,could you just supply a precise, concise, and witty clue for SWEET FANNY ADAMS?”

Well our nine marathon winners did just that.

Thank you so much for all your fantastic efforts of imagination.

Judgements

After weeks of oscillating between Auntie’s trifle and President Trump, I have decided:

| | |
|---------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. N&SI | VHC* BBC CiNA 3D World Champions 2019 |
| 2. JT | VHC 2 nd Place |
| 3. H&CK | HC 3 nd Place |
| 4. MJ | HC |
| 4. ML | HC |
| 5. PC | C |
| 5. DM | C |
| 5. JP | C |
| 5.GS | C |

Congratulations to Nick & Sarah Inglis in continuing their reign as BBC CiNA 3D Crosswords World Champions 2019.

| Position | Clue & Solver Explanation | Discussion and Judgement |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| 1st N&SI | <p>'Pudding enthusiast starts to nick your aunt's dessert and mouths "Say nothing!" (5,5,5)</p> <p>Explanation: SWEET (pudding) + FAN (enthusiast) + NYADAMS (starts to Nick Your Aunt's Dessert And Mouths Say) Definition: nothing</p> | <p>The image is delicious, the clue delightful, with a great sense of fun. The solver's imagination will no doubt take over and extend the wonderful surface. Maybe we have a sleepy or tolerant aunt who is amused by youngster perhaps taking an occasional spoonful of aunt's trifle. Spotted by niece/nephew who is about to blow the gaff, the pantomime continues. Will niece tell? There is humour here and gentle naughtiness, in a cosy family atmosphere.</p> <p>Not tempted by using a large anagram, the setters produce a precise charade of two synonyms and then a first letters sequence. The definition of 'nothing' is obscured nicely in the phrase "Say nothing!" Great clue.</p> <p>This is a very strong contender. Every word counts. I love this clue.</p> <p>Very Highly Commended*</p> |
| 2nd JT | <p>'Awkward ways man fastened zip'</p> | <p>This anagram clue is elevated considerably by the wheelie bin-kicking hilarity in the surface. Great definition of zip is obscured by the image in the surface of fastening flies. I'm thinking flies and not about 'nothing'.</p> <p>The setter has juggled letters and found something extremely funny. The surface is so good but, without getting into an awkward discussion in this delicate area, how many awkward ways are there?? Maybe this gem could have a last polish. Maybe not. Perhaps the fact that this chap is finding so many different ways makes the clue funnier.</p> <p>'Awkward way man's fastened zip' Maybe this is a little smoother. And we all remember occasions when a poor chap has not accomplished 100% fastening. But one hopes this is a very occasional occurrence.</p> <p>Great clue, concise, precise, sweet as a nut, which made me laugh. Well guffaw actually! The wheelie bin has another dent!</p> <p>Very Highly Commended</p> |

| Position | Clue & Solver Explanation | Discussion and Judgement |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| <p>3rd H&CK</p> | <p>'Nothing endearing for bum American President'</p> | <p>This is neat, concise and precise in its definition placement and charade wordplay of three synonyms. This is a triumph interlinking synonyms which combine to make a convincing surface. It deals with 'fanny' nicely. It's very solvable. The surface is almost great and an obvious president comes to my mind immediately. It's satirically cutting. 'American' might be accused of doing double duty in indicating the US meaning of 'bum' and qualifying the President's country. But this last is not necessary in current times. We know what the surface refers to.</p> <p>This is a high quality clue elevated by the dig in the surface. It's political which could be an asset or a detractor depending on the publication. We would definitely use it with a small edit</p> <p>The clue is nearly perfect. The only imperfection for me is the little word 'for'. It would be great to polish the surface a little more. 'for' does not quite ring true in my surface reading. Neither is it a satisfactory word in the wordplay.</p> <p>I have an image of Donald Trump and I think this has been deliberately generated in my imagination. If 'for' was switched to 'about', the surface would be <i>fantastic</i>. But the wordplay would have to take account of it by a reversal, a 'surrounding of something, or an anagram or something else. So 'about' won't do.</p> <p>There are similar problems with 'from'.</p> <p>Perhaps 'for' doesn't need to be there at all? Nothing endearing – bum US President' Works quite well and effectively says that there is nothing endearing about Trump. It's more concise and the synonyms are in the right order, so why put an extra word in? Every word should count. '</p> <p>This last point about 'for' is a mild caution and one does see 'for' used in this way by some setters. They use the word to mean 'to go with' in the wordplay. 'For' is better used in front of a definition.</p> <p>Nevertheless, the clue has that terrific run of synonyms and a real sting in the surface. It would be easy to edit into a winner. I kicked the wheelie bin, real hard.</p> <p>Highly Commended</p> |

| Position | Clue & Solver Explanation | Discussion and Judgement |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Joint 4th MJ | <p>'New Mets fans arranged to take a day off; nothing came of it' (5,5,5)</p> <p>(anag of "a day" in anag of "New Mets fans")</p> | <p>The phrase is clued here with an anagram. This one is made more interesting by use of two potential anagram signals, 'new' and 'arranged' and as a compound anagram. The surface is plausible and smooth, with the definition nicely disguised within 'nothing came of it'. The definition is usually placed at the beginning or the end of a clue. This slight stretch of the 'rules' makes sense to me. The clue is perfectly solvable and once solved, it is crystal clear. 'came of it' clearly refers to 'nothing' ie SFA.</p> <p>Looking at the compound the setter shows precision in placing an anagram of 'A DAY' inside an anagram of 'NEW METS FANS'. 'take' indicates one anagram capturing the other.</p> <p>This is difficult to solve and is unlikely to yield in the first pass through the clues. There is a good chance it will yield when several checking letters from other solutions appear in the grid.</p> <p>Highly Commended</p> |
| Joint 4th ML | <p>'New news: feast day - man in army has dessert trench rations' (5,5,5)</p> | <p>'New' signals the anagram of (NEWS: FEAST DAY – MAN)* to make SWEET FANNY ADAMS.</p> <p>Now I am left with 'in army has dessert trench rations' to provide the definition. In conventional clues, the whole of the definition is clued 'in one go' It might be a synonym like a dictionary definition of something more cryptic. However, in this case the setter shows daring and provides another piece of cryptic wordplay. For SWEET and for FANNY ADAMS. I am not sure that 'army' is needed in the wordplay.</p> <p>'trench rations' is a reference (Wikipedia) to the introduction of tinned mutton in the services. The setter shows erudition and/or good research.</p> <p>The setter adds 'dessert' to the reference asking the solver to add SWEET. This is more cryptic wordplay. The reference is well found, if gruesome. Solvers will be interested and horrified to discover it.</p> <p>We have a double cryptic wordplay clue with no definition in the usual sense, whether cryptic or straightforward. The reference is military slang.</p> <p>Given this is historical, there might be a quibble with 'has' rather than 'had'.</p> <p>Advanced solvers (like the setter) will enjoy tracking this down. Either the checking letters in a 3D grid will shout the answer, or the anagram will come first, and then the second part might be unpacked. It's brave, mildly eccentric but definitely solvable. And</p> <p>Highly Commended</p> |

| Position | Clue & Solver Explanation | Discussion and Judgement |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Joint 5th PC | <p>'Nada's 'many'? Fewest, sort of!' (5,5,5)</p> <p>(Anag)</p> | <p>This intriguing paradoxical riddle will have the solver circling several times before finding the way in. It's a nonsense that makes some kind of sense' The setter's anagram signal capitalises on this. I love it. It will yield as the solver appreciates the significance of the familiar 'sort of' as an anagram signal and looks for fifteen letters for an anagram.</p> <p>(NADAS MANY FEWEST)* uses up the remainder of the clue.</p> <p>The definition - 'Nada' – is at the beginning, following conventions, but NADA is doing double duty as part of the anagram. This will not delay the solver for long but it is not conventional.</p> <p>There is a way of looking at the clue which brings it into the fold. You could argue that the <i>whole of the clue</i> is nonsense and means nothing. This could now be viewed as an & LIT clue where the whole clue is wordplay and the definition at the same time. I'm not sure that would be fair! And it is not argued by the setter.</p> <p>Commended</p> |
| Joint 5th DM | <p>'Not a swan at sea fed many a stew' (5,5,5)</p> <p>Definition: stew With a sense of the sea)</p> <p>Anagram of SWAN AT SEA FED MANY (not A)</p> | <p>The solver has managed to assemble letters into words in a phrase, cleverly deploying 'Not a' to subtract an unwanted letter. 'at sea' is both a distracting false anagram signal and gives a nautical flavour helpful in finding the solution. This shows excellent research into the background of poor Fanny Adams and unpopular nautical stew.</p> <p>I see that (SWAN AT SEA FED MxNY)* is an anagram for SWEET FANNY ADAMS but the 'a' just before 'stew' whilst unwanted, would need to be included. 'stew' is fine as an anagram signal but I'm not sure that 'a stew' is. If the clue read 'A stew of SWAN AT SEA FED MxNY)* the wordplay would be fine, but the surface reading would suffer.</p> <p>'stew' is both a definition and an anagram indicator and is doing double duty which is frowned upon. 'stew' defines FANNY ADAMS as dark humoured navy and military slang. I'm not sure it extends to SWEET as well.</p> <p>Nevertheless, there is so much that is good here and could be edited very easily. Hence Commended.</p> |

| Position | Clue & Solver Explanation | Discussion and Judgement |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Joint 5th JP | "Shuffling sad NY man was feet off Ground Zero" (5,5,5) | <p>This is an anagram of (SAD NY MAN WAS FEET)*. There appears to be more than one anagram signal making it harder to spot the anagram fodder. 'Shuffling' and 'off' and arguably 'Ground' could all be signals. Is this deliberate obfuscation or is more polish needed? Is more than one signal a kindness or is it unfair. An anagram of an anagram of an anagram is still an anagram! IUs it a slightly dodgy way of improving the surface? I don't think that this will impede the solver for long. Nicer surface but less concise.</p> <p>The image of the sad New Yorker shuffling along is wonderfully compelling. New York and Ground Zero are lovely links concealing 'Ground' as a possible anagram signal and 'Zero' as definition. Very nice. It doesn't stop the solver getting the answer. It's not terribly unfair in that sense but it bends the usual rules. The wordplay lacks some concision because one of the two words is not necessary. Nevertheless: Commended</p> |

| Position | Clue & Solver Explanation | Discussion and Judgement |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| <p>Joint 5th GS</p> | <p>'Initially, Southgate was evidently energizing the football authorities, but it came to nothing!' (5, 5, 5)</p> <p>A) Initially indicates first letters - which gives us SWEETFA. The definition of the clue is the word "nothing".</p> <p>B) I don't know if there is a word for this in crossword setter jargon but the first five letters are a word "sweet" but the last two FA are an abbreviation.</p> <p>C) The expression "Sweet FA has two popular forms , one being (5,4,3)!</p> <p>D) But as the rules clearly stipulate "in the best possible taste" it is most fortunate that our letter count reads (5,5,5)</p> <p>Other: At first reading some solvers, uninterested in the world of football, might think the word Southgate requires knowledge external to the confines of the clue. Hopefully (with a little research) his/ her connection with football authorities as in Football Association will make it clear that the clue is self contained.</p> | <p>The definition - 'Nada' – is at the beginning, following conventions, but NADA is doing double duty as part of the anagram. This will not delay the solver for long but it is not conventional.</p> <p>There is a way of looking at the clue which brings it into the fold. You could argue that the <i>whole of the clue</i> is nonsense and means nothing. This could now be viewed as an & LIT clue where the whole clue is wordplay and the definition at the same time. I'm not sure that would be fair! And it is not argued by the setter.</p> <p>Commended</p> |

| Position | Clue & Solver Explanation | Discussion and Judgement |
|--------------------|--|--|
| N/A ABe | <p>1, Zip fastened man's way - oops! (5,5,5) Def: 'zip', anagram ('oops!') of 'fastened man's way'.</p> <p>2. Nice American behind ex-President is not a sausage (5,5,5) Def: 'not a sausage', SWEET ('nice'), FANNY ('American behind'), ADAMS (ex-President).</p> <p>3. False dawn: safety means nothing (5,5,5) Def: 'nothing', anagram ('false') of 'dawn safety means'.</p> | <p>This non-contender didn't qualify for the championship as he had not successfully completed 12 puzzles in the championship. He sent in some super clues for our amusement and Puck says he shows great promise.</p> |

Very well done to all tie-break entrants for going the extra mile to establish the overall winners this year.

Eric Westbrook

Sirius 3D Crossword Designer

Le President

2019 RPM45 TROPHY

This was my first experience of judging crossword grids and I learned a huge amount during the process not only from the entrants but also from Shirley & Charles Curran who gave me tremendous support and encouragement; my grateful thanks to them. Most of all, I learned from the entrants how exciting and devious are the minds of our solvers, how they can construct grids combining great simplicity with huge intricacy and provide fabulous head-smacking moments.

| Placing | Comments | Clues |
|---------------------|--|---|
| 1 - P | An interesting theme with an amusing play on the themed words. Good provisional instructions and Day 13 gives a lovely snake, echoing the theme. 1 bar and 4 overlaps. The total number of 32 clues is really commendable and would fit beautifully on a calendar page. An abbreviation might be problematic. | A great and memorable clue. It is beautiful concise and humorous. |
| 2 - N&SI | This grid makes an excellent use of themed words length of which create a number of snakes, There is a delightful innovation in the top grid which made us smile. 4 bars and 6 overlaps is high, as is 44 clues for a 31 day month. A lower number of themed cells but it might have been more balanced and required fewer accommodations. More than one change of direction in a 5 letter word is only acceptable because it is thematic. | The anagram pointer works and this is an ambitious clue but the surface reading is less clear. |
| 3 - MJ | A very balanced percentage of themed words covering the subject thoroughly. Our solvers will love this one and the compilation has a sound set of words that will be a pleasure for the clue setter. 1 bar and 7 overlaps is rather high. The 7x5x7 provides 41 words which, again, is high for a calendar, | A really super clue, although there is an unwarranted leap from one word in the clue to the word required in the anagram. |
| 4 - PD | A fun subject allowing a variety of approaches for the themed words creating an impressive percentage and can be used for any month. There are 5 bars but two non-words going down the grid which make it less elegant. Nevertheless, overall a pleasing grid. | A lovely clue. It might not be the hardest clue in the world but it brings a smile. |
| 4 - AG | This is an interesting grid which could be used for any month and which has an added element which will stretch the solvers. There are 7 bars and one overlap. The 7x5x7 grid provides 42 words which is rather a high number for a calendar but is an interesting and clear grid. | N/A |
| 4 - ML | This grid is great fun and can be used for any month. There is a very high percentage of themed cells although this means that once the theme is guessed, solvers will be able to work out a lot of answers without too much head scratching. There are 7 bars. Good use has been made of the 5x5x5 grid. Day 10 does not fit the grid. There is a clever anagram running through the grid. | A witty, themed clue on the surface but without much need for parsing. |
| 4 - GS | Managing to fill your grid with a mere 36 words is a real achievement. No bars, 11 overlapping which is high. There is an innovative hidden message although this will create grinding difficulties. There were a couple of errors in clue numbering. | A clever and witty clue although it requires some rather lateral solving that is not adequately indicated. |
| RT | An unfinished grid submitted for a 'giggle' with an innovative use of central blocks of cells. The grid has only 4 layers which is rather small. Nevertheless, we would encourage the designer to consider preparing a grid for our 2021 calendar, if he has time. | N/A |