

NOTES ON LISTENER CROSSWORDS: NUMBERS 1001 – 1500

Crossword No. 1009: Holiday Fare by Altair

The crossword section included the following announcement:

‘ARMCHAIR CROSSWORDS’

Solvers of LISTENER crosswords who revel in Afrit’s gems, and many other people besides, will welcome *Armchair Crosswords*, by Afrit (Warne, 3s. 6d.), a recently published book of forty puzzles, mostly reprinted after some revision from *The Sketch* and THE LISTENER. They are not indeed of the stern older stuff, but nevertheless are full of interest and good fun, and a source of refreshment. The clues, though simpler, have the old tang; and the promise of the title is fulfilled—one may sit and solve. The book is introduced by an admirable summary of crossword theory.

TRACER

Crossword No. 1023: Higher Powers by W. McNaught

The arithmetic involved in this puzzle clearly perplexed some solvers, since it appeared to involve the computation of very large powers. The setter had an explanatory letter published the week after the solution appeared.

“Sir, —As several people have written to ask how this arithmetical puzzle can be done in less than half a lifetime, may I answer them in print? There is no need to work out any high power. The calculation here required by such a thing as $29^{41} - 53T$ (which turns up for 3 across) can be done in ten minutes on one side of a postcard. We have to relate powers of 29 to multiples of 53. [There then follows the detailed working.] Thus 29^{41} is 7 more than a multiple of 53. Postcard ends. From data known at this stage, 3 across can only be 484. The workings are not all as easy as that one. —Yours, etc. W. McNAUGHT”

Crossword No. 1066: And all that by Altair

This puzzle commemorated the book *1066 and All That*, by Sellar and Yeatman, a parody of an historical textbook, much loved by schoolchildren of that generation (and later).

Crossword No. 1067: The Dream by Babs

This puzzle appeared a week later than intended because the edition of September 7th 1950 was not printed because of “circumstances beyond our control”.

There were four missed editions later that year (all of October) “owing to the dispute in the printing trade”.

Crossword No. 1107: Equations by Trand

One winner of this mathematical puzzle was H. Bondi, of Cambridge, presumably Professor Sir Hermann Bondi the cosmologist who, in his career, was director-general of the European Space Research Organization and chief scientific adviser to the Ministry of Defence. He was also well-known through television appearances.

Crossword No. 1122: Ant-Hill by Topher

This puzzle was headed by the following announcement:

From next week 'The Listener' will award three prizes (for the first three correct solutions opened) of book tokens values respectively at 30s., 21s. and 12s. 6d. The six-monthly consolation prize will be discontinued.

Crossword No. 1148: Both Worlds (1148 = ARD) by Abdul

This alpha-numeric puzzle – part mathematical, part cryptic – was the first in which a full quota of prizes was not awarded, since the move to three prizes. No comment was made about this. In more recent times, such puzzles have tended to have a reduced entry, presumably because they require both numerical and cryptic clue solving skills.

A further reason for a low number of correct solutions was the observation "Formulae for most of the problems set have already appeared in THE LISTENER". This would have put at a disadvantage those who had come to the puzzle series late.

Crossword No. 1150: Quotagrams — II by Zander

It is possible that the first prizewinner is the musician Sir David Willcocks. He was organist at Worcester Cathedral from 1950–57 and principal conductor of the Three Choirs Festival at that time. He is known to be a regular **Azed** solver.

Crossword No. 1253: Arma Virumque Cano by Zander

Unconnected with this puzzle, the following letter appeared, the date being May 6, 1954.

'Afrif'

Sir,—On April 10, *The Times* contained a notice of the death two days earlier of Prebendary Alistair Ferguson Ritchie, Headmaster of Wells Cathedral School. I had expected to see some reference in THE LISTENER because, under the pseudonym of Afrif, he had long been connected with your crosswords. Afrif's first puzzle—No. 123—appeared in July 1932, and during the ensuing years prior to the war he set more than 125 crosswords for you. After the war he only occasionally gave us the pleasure of trying to find the answers to his riddles, and it is almost six years since his last LISTENER appeared in May 1948.

Many solvers will also remember him through his book of *Armchair Crosswords*, published in 1949. —Yours, etc.,

Norwich

IVAN CRESSWELL

Crossword No. 1255: It All Depends by Vectis

Unconnected with this puzzle, the following letter appeared, the date being May 20, 1954.

'Afrif'

Sir,—May another of 'Afrif's' admirers pay homage to that great man? As headmaster of Wells Cathedral School, Prebendary A. F. Ritchie was outstandingly successful and greatly beloved, but most readers of THE LISTENER knew him only as 'Afrif', the prince of crossword-composers.

His versatility was astonishing. In quick succession he would give us a Biblical crossword, a Cross-Number, and a puzzle based on one of the signs of the Zodiac, evincing (and demanding of us) an extensive knowledge of English literature. But his real genius lay in the devising of many entirely new types of crossword, some of which have found enthusiastic imitators. ‘Printer’s Devilry’, ‘Playfair’, and ‘Word-Ladder’, for instance, were his invention; so also was ‘Twenty-Six’, wherein words were treated as numbers in that scale (*e.g.*, IQNFP = double DUTCH). After 1939 his appearances became rarer, but his skill was undiminished. His later puzzles included ‘Venture atte Bowe’ (an extremely witty French crossword), ‘Two Sees’ (in which every clue had two different solutions), and last, and most rollicking of all, ‘Puns Asinorum’ in May 1948.

THE LISTENER crosswords were already famous in the nineteen-thirties; it was ‘Afrit’ more than anyone else who made them so. —Yours, etc.,

York

L. E. EYRES

(L. E. Eyres was the setter **Pollux**.)

Crossword No. 1347: Sub Rosa by Pone

This puzzle appeared after a gap of four weeks. The magazine was smaller in size and carried an apology:

“We regret that owing to circumstances beyond our control, THE LISTENER has not appeared for the past four weeks, and that the present number is smaller than usual. For these facts we ask our readers’ indulgence”

The following week was similar, but now carried an explanation that this was “owing to the dispute in the London printing trade”. Things were back to normal one week later.

Crossword No. 1377: Triangular by Nabla

“As some solvers have pointed out, V (153) and Y (171) are not the products of two primes; we join with the setter in apologising for the mistake.”