

2018 Cryptic Crossword Records

Week 8 Thursday 4th January 2018:

We started off our New Year by reviewing our progress to date by working through the exercises on pages 44, 66 and 71.

Our 'homework' this time is to try and complete Practice Puzzle 3 on page 72.

Sue has suggested that we all try to obtain a copy of The Sun Two-Speed Crossword, Collection 3 (2016). ISBN 978-0-00-819013-2. Cost £6.99 but probably available more cheaply. We intend to use this both in our sessions and for extra practice at home.

We hope to start Chapter 4, page 81 at our next meeting on Thursday 18th January 2018.

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Week 9: Thursday 18th January 2018

We had a full group today. After a recap on previous work, we moved on to Chapter 4, page 81. It's getting more challenging!

We looked at:

Letter Sequence clues

Moving letter clues

Letter substitution clues

Spoonerisms

and Homophones.

We worked through the Homophones practice clues on page 85.

Our homework this time is to try and complete Crosswords 1 and 2 from The Sun two-speed Crossword, Collection 3.

Our next meeting is on Thursday 1st February, am, Room 1, The Centre.

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Week 10: Thursday 1st February 2018

Today we worked through Crosswords 1 & 2 from The SUN two-Speed Crossword book, Collection 3.

For homework we will try to complete Crossword 3 and possibly start on Crossword 4. We are encouraged to re-read pages 81 – 88 from the Workbook to help us with the occasional 'Double Definition' and 'Cryptic Definition' clues found in the SUN crosswords we are now attempting.

Our next meeting is on Thursday 15th February 2018, Room 1, The Centre, at 9am.

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Week 11 Thursday 15th February 2018

Today we worked through pages 86 – 93 of the Workbook and spent the last part of our session discussing issues relating to Crossword 3 (SUN Two – Speed Crossword Book 3).

The homework is to read pages 94 – 97 from the Workbook and attempt Practice Puzzle 4, page 97. If more practice is desired we can make a start on the SUN crossword 4!

Our next meeting is on Thursday 1st March at 9 am in Room 1, The Centre.

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Week 12 Thursday 15th March 2018

Unfortunately, severe weather prevented us meeting on Thursday 1st March.

Today we worked through some of the issues in Chapter 4 that had caused us some problems. We then worked our way through Practice Puzzle 4 (p97) and the Sun Crossword number 4. All of us are, to varying degrees, finding solving the clues quite a challenge!

Our 'homework' is to read from page 105 through to page 109 and complete the practice clues on page 110.

Next meeting/s: our meeting dates and times have had to be altered for April. We will meet again on Thursday 12th April (time and place to be agreed) and then again on Thursday 19th April at 10am at the Group Leader's home. After that we expect to return to our usual 1st and 3rd Thursdays in the month.

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Week 13: Thursday 12th April 2018

After a month's break, we needed some practice revision!

Sue initially set us to work on Dingbats. We found these surprisingly challenging to do individually, but collectively and with Sue's help we managed to work them all out. One needs a different way of seeing and interpreting things! We then started work on two new crosswords which we later discussed as a group explaining how we worked out our solutions.

Next meeting:

Thursday 19th April at 10 am at the Group Leader's home. No 'homework' as such as we intend to have a revision session amongst ourselves while Sue is away.

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Week 14: Thursday 19th April 2018

Today we were on our own, without out Sue, our facilitator!

We started by continuing our discussion regarding our plans for the group presentation after the AGM main meeting.

We all agreed that we struggled to identify the parts of a cryptic crossword – the definition, the indicator, the answer and the wordplay, so we set ourselves the task of identifying these in Practice Puzzle 2 across and down clues. We worked together and by the end of the session had achieved our goal. In the process, I think it’s fair to say that we felt that we had made some progress!

The next meeting is on Thursday 3rd May at 10 am at the Group Leader’s house.

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Week 15: Thursday 3rd May 2018

All members attended today. Some time was spent discussing our arrangements for the Group Presentation after the AGM. Many thanks to Kathy for the printing of hand-outs. We had a discussion regarding personal data held by the GL and that shared by the group in order to meet the new data protection regulations.

We looked again at Puzzle 2 from the Workbook to enable all the group to be prepared for the AGM group presentation.

‘Homework’ is to do as much as possible on the Sun two-way puzzle number 10

The next meeting will be at 10 am on Thursday 17th May at Sue B’s house.

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Week 16: Thursday 17th May 2018

Today's meeting was at Sue B's house. The group worked on SUN crosswords 11, 12 and perhaps 13.

Next meeting on Thursday 7th June at leader's house.

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Week 17: Thursday 7th June 2018.

Most of our time today was spent on finalising our presentation for the AGM on June 12th.

'Homework' is to try and complete Crosswords 13, 14 and 15 from the SUN Two-speed Crossword Book, Collection 3.

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Tuesday 12th June 2018. Ravenshead U3A AGM Group Presentation

Dear group members,

Thank you all for your wonderful help today at the Ravenshead U3A's Group Presentations. I hope we made an impression!

Special thanks to Sue B for preparing the crossword board - I think it was 'just the job' - eye-catching, and it enabled members to get involved. Thanks also to Sue W for taking 'action' photos and to Kathy for the printing!

The next meeting is on Thursday 21st June at the GL's house at 10am.

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Week 18: Thursday 21st June 2018

We welcomed two new members to the group today.

Unfortunately our facilitator, Sue B was not well enough to join us, so in her absence we decided to work through our homework; SUN crosswords 13, 14 and 15. We worked together to explain how clues had been solved and to solve clues not completed at home. We completed crossword 15 and part of 13. How time flies when you are enjoying yourself!

Homework: We set ourselves the task to try to complete SUN crossword 16.

Next meeting: Thursday 5th July 2018 at 10.00am.

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Week 19: Thursday 5th July 2018

We spent the first part of the session working through Sun crossword 16 – especially on clues that had given members problems.

After that we attacked Sun crossword 23, each working at her own pace. Those who had finished early started work on the Crossword published on page 52 in Third Age Matters, Issue 32.

We finished by discussing how some of the clues were solved in Sun crossword 23, and those who hadn't quite finished hope to complete it for homework. Most of us finished the morning knowing the meaning of several new words, including i.e TYRO / TIRO meaning 'novice, beginner', and EM meaning 'unit of measurement equal to space occupied by m (name of letter M)'. Personally, I now also know that a RAIL is a bird. We are sure the U3A HQ would approve of such learning!

Homework: Try to complete SUN crosswords 17 & 18 and possibly 23. That should be quite enough!

Next meeting: Thursday 19th July at 10 am at the GL's house.

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Week 20: Thursday 19th July 2018

We started by working out way through SUN crossword 17 which most of us had attempted to varying degrees but no one had finished! As necessary, Sue B helped us understand how the answers were achieved. As a group we tackled SUN Crossword 19 and enjoyed the satisfaction of completing it. During the morning's activities we came across a number of new words, abbreviations and facts:

ICA - Institute of Contemporary Arts (London).

Alf Garnet's wife is called Elsie

A 'Doughboy' (inf) is a term for a US Infantryman, especially one in WW1

Gumbo - a South American stew or soup often made with fish or chicken and usually containing okra.

Quadrant (historical) - an instrument used for taking angular measurements of altitude in astronomy and navigation, typically consisting of a graduated quarter circle and a sighting mechanism.

Abrade - to scrape off, injure by rubbing.

Homework: Try to complete the TAT Crossword compiled by Faringdon & District U3A in the latest issue (handout available) and have a go at SUN crossword 20.

Next meeting: Thursday 2nd August, 10 am till 11.45 am at the GL's house.

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Week 21: Thursday 2nd August 2018

Today we were without Sue, our tutor. We had all found the homework quite challenging so we diligently worked as a group through both the Sun crossword 20 and the Faringdon & District U3A crosswords. Six heads are definitely much better than one! The satisfaction is working out how the solution is achieved.

In the course of our workings we were reminded of several words that we really did know but hadn't used recently or had forgotten. The exact

meaning of one clue, 'outlawry' was unknown to us all – it means 'the condition of or condemnation as outlaw'. Some of us did not know that November 1st is All Saints Day – we do now!

Homework: Try to complete SUN crossword 21

Next meeting: Thursday 16th August, 10 am till 11.45 a.m. at the GL's house.

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Week 22: Thursday 16th August 2018

This week we were without our facilitator so we started off by working through SUN crossword 23, our set homework. There were sighs of relief when we realised that all of us had found it difficult. Somehow or other we found ourselves working on SUN crossword 22 and this proved to be a very interesting crossword which we did manage to complete.

Once again some new words and some previously half-forgotten words came to light:

'Olla' turns out to be a Spanish cooking pot.

'Factious' means showing 'faction' and the definition of 'faction' is 'self-interested or unscrupulous party or group, especially in politics'. That's interesting!

A 'lied' is a German song.

'Rug' is a slang term for a hairpiece.

Homework : We agreed to try to complete SUN Crosswords 24 & 25.

Next meeting: Thursday 20th September at the GL's house. It was agreed to cancel the meeting on 6th September as many members of the group were unable to attend.

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Week 23: Thursday 20th September 2018

The group hadn't met for a month, so there was naturally a bit of socialising before we settled down to the business in hand.

With Sue's help and guidance we worked through our homework – SUN

crosswords 24 & 25. Regular sighs and gasps followed explanations of how the clue was solved. For example, the supposed definition was 'children's writer', but the solution was not Enid Blyton or any other children's author – it was 'crayon'. 'Blow on a piece of topside' caused us to think again – the solution was 'uppercut'. Nice one!

Our vocabulary was further extended today:

A 'maw' is 'the stomach of an animal or person', 'the jaws or throat of a voracious animal', the 'mouth or gullet of a greedy person', a 'common Scottish word for mother'.

'Elysian' means 'abode of the blessed after death' (Gk Myth), (place of) ideal happiness.

A 'pas' is a step in french and one of the many meanings of its reverse, 'sap', is an idiot (sl).

Not all of us knew that a 'roc' is a 'gigantic bird of Eastern legend'. I must have been absent or asleep when this was covered at school!

And finally, not all of us knew that 'bane' can mean 'a cause of ruin or trouble' or a 'poison' – such as wolfsbane. We do now.

Homework: Try to complete SUN Crosswords 26 and 27.

Next meeting: Thursday, October 4th at Sue's home. However this meeting may be cancelled due to the number of 'apologies' already received. Do please confirm your attendance directly with Sue asap so that she can make a decision.

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Week 24: Thursday 18th October 2018

We worked very hard today! We started off by completing the last difficult clues in a Women's Institute Prize Crossword that two of our group were working on – if we win we might share a beauty box worth £125!

After that we worked through SUN crossword 26, the homework from our last session.

We came across quite a few useful words today:

A 'ness' is 'a headland or promontory'. It originates from Old English 'naes' relating to 'nose'

Tungsten (chemical symbol W, atomic number 74) is a rare metal found naturally on Earth almost exclusively combined with other

elements in chemical compounds rather than alone. It was identified as a new element in 1781 and first isolated as a metal in 1783. Its important ores include wolframite and scheelite.

A tourney: a tournament, especially a medieval joust.

Pipit: a mainly ground-dwelling songbird of open country, typically having brown streaky plumage.

Biretta: a square cap with three flat projections on top, worn by Roman Catholic clergymen.

Homework: To complete SUN crossword 27 and try to complete SUN crossword 28

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Week 25: Thursday 1st November 2018

Once again, we had another busy session.

We worked through clues from Sun Crosswords 27 & 28 that we had found challenging, and as a consequence increased our vocabulary yet again.

'Adduce'. If you adduce something such as a fact or reason, you mention it in order to support an argument [formal]. We can adduce evidence to support the claim. [Synonyms: mention, offer, name, present].

'Negus' is a royal title in the Ethiopian Semitic languages. It denotes a monarch, such as the Bahri Negus of the Medri Bahri kingdom in pre-1890 Eritrea, and the Negus in pre-1974 Ethiopia. The Negus is referred to as An-Najashi in the Islamic tradition. Wikipedia. It also refers to a hot drink of port, sugar, lemon and spice created in the Mid 18 C by Colonel Francis Negus who died in 1732

'Saw'. In addition to being a tool for cutting or a serrated organ or part, it can also be a proverb or maxim.

'Bald'. In addition to meaning a scalp lacking hair or a tyre having tread worn away, it can also mean 'plain', 'blunt' and 'forthright'.

'To sing' can also mean 'to give information or evidence'.

'Steps'. In addition to its many other meanings, 'Steps' can also refer to a 1990/2000s British dance-pop group.

'Saboteur' - we were interested to know that 'Saboteur is a noun that is fairly new to the English language; it was first used in the early 1900s, and it refers to a person who deliberately destroys or obstructs something. It comes from the French word, saboter, which really and

truly means to kick something with an old-fashioned wooden shoe'.
Homework: Complete Sun crosswords 30 & 31.

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Week 26: Thursday 15th November 2018

We worked really hard today – some felt a headache coming on!
To begin, we worked through the two Sun crosswords, 30 & 31 which had been our set homework. Crossword 30 was found particularly challenging and all confessed to looking at some quick 'coffee time' clues, and when desperate, even the answers! After that Sue B provided us with a crossword from another book to challenge us – and it did.

Once again we reminded ourselves of the meaning of words that we seldom if ever have reason to use or less well known facts. For example:

Riposte: a quick, clever reply to an insult or criticism or a quick return thrust in fencing.

Tamp: to ram or pack (a substance) down or into something firmly. To pack (a blast hole) full of clay or sand to concentrate the force of the explosion.

Ems – a river in Germany

Opera is the plural of opus. I hadn't realised that.

Homework: Try to complete Sun crosswords 32 & 33.

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Week 27: Thursday 6th December 2018

This week we were without Sue, our facilitator, so we had to fend for ourselves with some helpful notes / explanations that she provided for our assistance. We worked steadily through our homework, Sun crosswords 32 and 33 and between us with a little help from the answers at the back of the book, we were able to complete both. I hope Mike won't mind me saying that he was on good form today! As is normal for us, a number of interesting words came to our attention this week.

Imago: this word was a complete mystery to all of us. It transpires that it means (1) Entomology: 'The final and fully developed adult stage of an insect, typically winged'. For added information, as insects have six

legs, they are commonly defined as 'six-footer' in crosswords. (2)
Psychoanalysis: 'an unconscious idealized mental image of someone, especially a parent, which influences a person's behaviour'. It might be a while before we can find a suitable situation to use either meaning of this word.

Ell: As I write I now remember that we have come across this unusual word before, but since none of us remembered it in the meeting it is worth restating. An 'ell' is an old measure, usually of fabric, and sounds like (say) the letter.

DIC: can be the 'shorthand' for Disseminated Intravascular Coagulation which is a condition in which blood clots form throughout the body, blocking small blood vessels. However, in today's crossword it referred to an American detective. So now we know! .

Livery: We all were aware that 'livery' can refer to 'a special uniform worn by a servant, an official or a member of a City Company' or a special pattern or design that is put on things that a company owns and sells'. In today's crossword, we think the term is also used to describe a person who is short tempered (possibly as a result of a liver condition), but so far I have not found any reference to support this.

Cashiers: we were reminded that this term not only refers to people who handle cash, but also to dismissal from the army.

Homework: to complete Sun Crossword 34 and try to complete 35.

Next meeting: Thursday 20th December, the final meeting of the year

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Week 28: Thursday 20th December 2018

Today was our last meeting of 2018.

The group has now been in existence for 15 months and we reached a new 'high' today! Sue B, our Facilitator, challenged us to try a Daily Telegraph Cryptic Crossword! We can now tell you that there is real degree of difficulty between the Sun and the Daily Telegraph Cryptic Crosswords. With considerable help from Sue, we managed to complete it, but without exception the group were happy to return to the Sun Crosswords, at least for a bit longer!

It goes without saying that we came across a number of interesting and unfamiliar words today:

Pickerel: According to Wikipedia, 'pickerel' has several meanings, but in today's context it meant ' a native North American fish'.

Ort: According to Google, an 'ort' is a scrap or morsel of food left over from a meal'. It originates from 15C Middle English and also Low Middle German.

Eclat: 'Eclat' has French origins; the verb éclater means to burst. The noun 'eclat' means 'brilliant success', 'showy display', 'acclaim'.

Ruth: Ruth is a Hebrew name. However, 'ruth' also means 'compassion for the misery of another, feelings of pity, distress'.

Drub: This interesting verb means 'to hit / beat repeatedly' as in trashing another football team.

Homework:

1. Try to complete the Cryptic Towns and Cities Quiz.
2. Try to complete Sun crosswords 36 & 37