

Summary

- 1. PO Box empty envelope mystery solved - is it?!!
- 2. Note from Nora
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- 4. March Competition
- 5. March Clues & Explanations

Stop Press!

March Extra

Deadline  
Midnight  
15th April  
2018

1. PO Box Mystery

Last month we reported receiving a stamped, franked envelope, perfect in every way except that one end had been sliced with a sharp blade. The envelope was empty. Another knife crime statistic. Our item in the Newsletter, whose tendrils reach some interesting parts of the world, received this reply:

*Eric - that is our envelope! If it was neatly sliced, i can only assume that someone in the postal service somewhere hoped that there may be something valuable inside, and didn't recognise the contents for the treasure which they were. As I say, the contents were safely returned to us, and we managed to resubmit in time. R&FH*

2. A message from Nora

One or two people have sent in photo images rather than scans. This is good as they will see straight away if the image is poor. Perhaps you could reassure people in one of your news-letters that this way of sending is a) acceptable and b) easy.

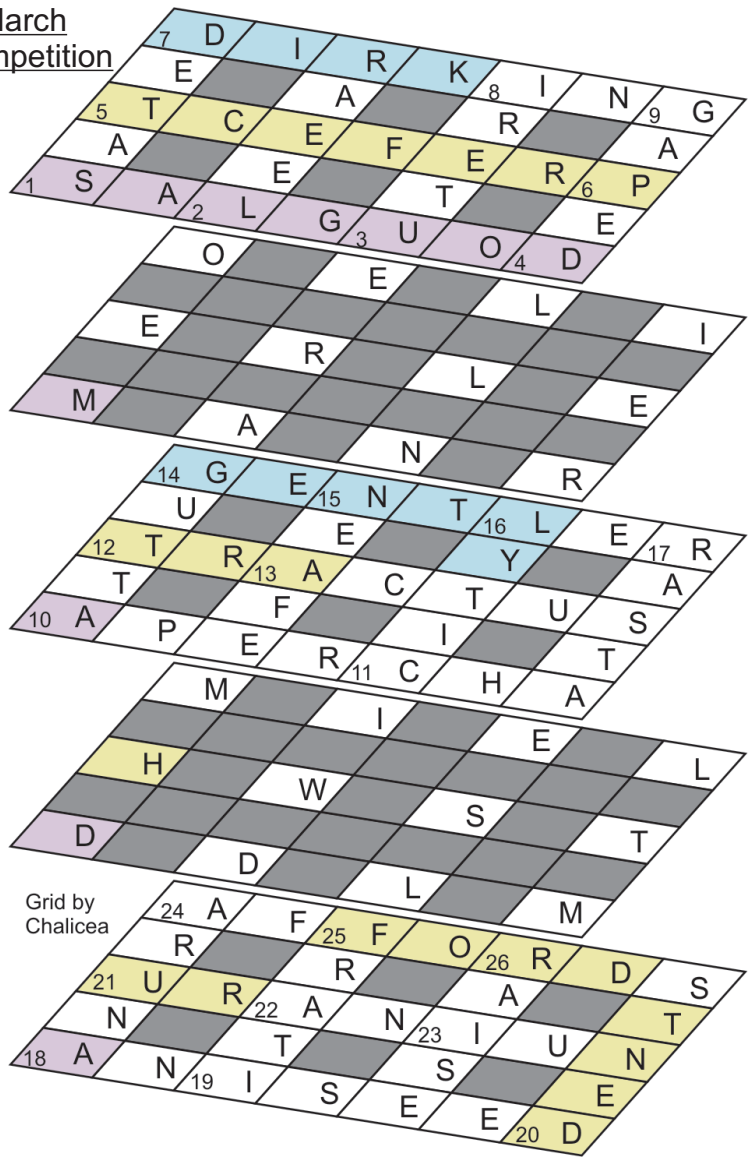
Kind regards  
Nora

3. 3D Discussions on Twitter

One of our solvers tells me she's rather isolated down in southern Portugal and has no one to discuss the 3D puzzles with. Hoping to find a little support, she's tentatively started a Twitter page along with a friend. They've called themselves the 3D Nit Twits and the Twitter page can be accessed at @3DNitTwits. While they would like some support, they obviously don't want solutions, just an occasional pointer, the odd hint, or just a sympathetic ear. It would be really kind if you could pop that message, or something similar, into the next newsletter.

With huge thanks, Jill

4. March Competition



Grid by Chalicea

March  
2018  
Shark  
Chalicea

The March Competition was won by Jan Burgess of Oxfordshire.  
Excellent solving!!

The puzzle celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the first radio broadcast of Douglas Adams' The Hitchhiker's guide to the Galaxy. Douglas Adams, Arthur Dent, Ford Prefect and Dirk Gently appeared in the grid.



Feedback on the March puzzle included:

Shark provided a very entertaining 3D much appreciated, and I was glad to say "Don't Panic!" PC

Please find below my solution for the March challenge. As is becoming customary, these monthly puzzles serve to widen my knowledge of subjects hitherto unattended to! I've come to the conclusion I need to improve my general knowledge ...

This puzzle commemorates the fortieth anniversary of the broadcast of the first 'Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy' by Douglas Adams who created Ford Prefect, Arthur Dent and Dirk Gently.

Hope this finds you well. Happy Easter!

With thanks and best wishes to you and all the 'team', SF

The March calendar puzzle theme was a subject very dear to my heart and it did not take long to confirm my suspicions and fill in the coloured cells with just a few clues solved. Luckily that did not reduce my enjoyment of the puzzle at all. A fine grid by Chalicea, and I think a wise choice to go for Dirk Gently rather than Zaphod etc!

I had a lot of fun solving Shark's clues which were not too taxing but very well written; some of the definitions are especially good. Favourites were DOGMA (especially), FINER, GENTLER, GIRLS, GUTTA PERCHA, IDEAL, LYTIC, and RASTA.

Many thanks to Chalicea and Shark and to yourself Eric as always. BL Herewith my March solution. A most enjoyable puzzle. The theme didn't emerge until I had solved most of the puzzle when Dirk Gently became obvious. An excellent grid by Chalicea helped conceal the various thematic elements until late. Lots of really good clues by Shark. I particularly enjoyed clue 19 16to LYTIC with it's missing para and clue 23 17to RASTA with it's dreaded WI. I look forward to seeing how clue 29 3aw UTERI is parsed. AG

I am sure Shark's March offering will be a popular theme for many of your solvers, since Douglas Adams is much loved in the crossword fraternity.

This was a relatively straightforward solve, with a neat grid and few serpents; favourite clues were for RASTA, GENTLER and UTERI. Maybe Shark will include Zaphod Beeblebrox and Slartibartfast in his next tribute!

Kmc

An easy one but enjoyable nevertheless. JM

I can't give you anything to put in the Newsletter because ... JB

March was a slog. Although the theme was diagnosed on Thursday the answers didn't fall into place until Saturday. 18 was then solved, but then the difficult part started solving the five letter downs and 2 15 25.

Ploughing through the dictionary really isn't that much fun RC

Needed a pan-galactic gargle-blaster after getting through this! N&SI

Never having read the books, nor seen the TV programme, I found it impossible to find the theme for this one and had to collude with my sister who, thankfully, had heard the original broadcast on the radio! After that, it was still far from plain sailing but fell into place... eventually! DS

This went beyond 'the extent of my tether' – a hugely troublesome experience! But very satisfying once it was finished! Thanks to Shark et al. Thank you so much for arranging with Adam to send me the hints support. I'd already hacked all but one of them, but was delighted to read his comments and I'll look forward to next month's. Then, today, I've managed to struggle through the remaining elusive solutions. JJ

It brought back happy memories of listening to the original radio show late at night, many years ago...well, forty years ago now I guess!

Where did all those years go?

(My son lives in crinkly Norway now...Slartibartfast got an award for Norway!)

All the best to all the competitors! B&SW

Nora is our marker. Solvers might hear from her if she thinks there is a transcription error on an answer grid perhaps. Nora Boswell was our second world champion in the beginnings. Great lady.

This means you are doing very well with the puzzles. :)

Yes I know it is a bit early, but I'm away for a few days soon (North York Moors) and I thought it best to send it through now - not least in case Nora comes back to me with any, er, transcription errors.

I found this one tough, with a fair number of obscure words bearing tricky clues. The real downside, of course, is that there wasn't a clue which led to the answer FORTY-TWO. Now there's a challenge. PA

Despite managing to 'cold solve' only 3 clues, I decided to persevere with this. With the help of the crossers I solved a few more. I had a huge slice of luck in then getting the themed 'creator' from only the 'S' common to both words and the first of the two 'A's in the shorter word. The theme was fun, but the rest of the puzzle was a bit of a grind.

15 clues were good (some very good), but the remaining 14 suffered, I felt, either from a lack of clarity or precision in the clue\* or because there was an obscure word or meaning in the clue or the answer.

An 'obscurity' in itself is not a bad thing, but I think there were too many instances in this puzzle. Likewise, although guessing an answer from the crossing letters and then retrofitting the clue is to be expected with some clues, there were too many answers for which the clue was of little help in solving.

Two clues were excellent:

Day 15 IDEAL (when I remembered who the setter was – very neat)  
Day 23 RASTA (with the clever whimsical indication 'possible dreaded WI')

As a solving experience this was a contrast to January's and February's puzzles. Shark probably appeals to solvers whose intuitive skills are greater than mine and who like having obscurities among the clues and answers.

\*The 'lack of clarity' that I am highlighting is not necessarily a fault – it can be a tool for a setter to use, within reason. All clues in the Shark puzzle, as far as I could tell, are valid according to cryptic rules and conventions. What I am referring to are instances of vagueness (possibly deliberate) in which an indication of an answer-word, or part of it, allows too many possible interpretations or matching answers for a solver to eliminate.

I don't know Shark the setter. The general quality of the clues leads me to think that he or she compiles barred-grid crosswords for enthusiasts in which obscurity and vagueness, to a degree, come as standard. AB

Having the first 12 solutions starting with 'A' was a surprise. The composers were familiar but not all the works.. Wikipedia to the rescue.MJ

Only solved two words on the first run through, but battled on. 'Hitcvhhikers was just my kind of humour and I loved the books. PD

I think solution is a very good addition to the 3D dislexicon hardt requiring a definition and describing very well most of my answers.

Another pleasurable experience ET

The theme came very quickly to me, well before answering most of the clues, after getting DIRKING, and the only DIRK I know is Dirk Gently ! And also because Hitchhikers Guide (Hexagonal Phase) was playing on the radio at the time and Radio 4 seemed full of "40th anniversary of the first broadcast" ... HE

Here's my entry for the March puzzle. I completed it a few weeks ago and must admit I have forgotten the reasoning behind some of my answers now but I'm sending it in and hoping for the best. I remember finding the theme quite quickly and that the words in the mauve, yellow and blue highlights helped a lot. JB

No problem with the theme, as there has just been a new version broadcast - of course that couldn't achieve the first one's stunning originality. The clue on the 17th was particularly good, but that on the 21st was rather unsatisfactory - 'on' doesn't really work to indicate an anagram.

I had some difficulty in starting the Extra, as I thought that it was going to be about Lincoln and the abolition of slavery - however I now have found the relevant anniversaries, so it shouldn't take too long to get done.

Best to you and Nora PM

Yet another fun puzzle to keep our brain power ticking over. T&CH

The giveaway to the theme was GENTL? The rest of the highlights fell in fairly quickly. After that obscure terms like LEEAR and NEAFE took longer to get. I would have liked to have seen more thematic solutions especially for a theme with such rich potential. JT

Many thanks to Shark and Chalicea for giving us such an entertaining puzzle. EL

Nice theme and a fun solve. Perhaps more obscure words than usual (one of which appeared in the latest Azed) but very well clued. RASTA might be the most ingeniously deceptive hidden solution I have ever seen. MLJ  
It seems so long ago when H2G2 appeared, but 40 years!

Ford became the giveaway answer. Assume it is TRACTUS as TRACTAS doesn't appear to exist and missed point of 'qs above'. DM

Here are my entries for the March crossword and the March Extra, both of which I enjoyed - as usual! I wish you a Happy Easter (if applicable), or at least a pleasurable weekend.JR

I found this one quite challenging as there are quite a few obscure words, a couple of which were hard to look up online!" Got the theme very quickly perhaps because of the 40th anniversary episodes of HHGTTG on Radio Four! GB



Bringing back memories of HHGG as it swept the radio listening nation in 1979. I was one swept up in the craze - after listening to the recent Radio 4 doc on the program I realise I must've heard one of the several immediate repeats that they put out that year due to popular demand.

Last day again because I have not been able to justify 2Aw LEEAR nor 15To NEAFE, in both cases happy with the wordplay but not the definition, but sending in the sheet anyway. I was expecting to find a Nessie hoax story featuring a Mr Lear but none was found

I expect if I ever track down where I've put my old Chambers Dict, I'll find Neafe is somehow a fist but my office room is in an even worse state of turmoil than usual and it is hiding very well. Stay well. AJR

A lovely theme. One clue presented uncertainty – Day 21 – I plumped for PUSH but it could be PEST. JN

Completed on 1st March and completely forgotten about until this morning. HHGTTG was a book I only read five or six years ago. What a misguided youth I led. PW

Here is my solution to Shark's highly ingenious and quite challenging puzzle commemorating the first radio broadcast on 8 March 1978 of Douglas Adams' Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy featuring Ford Prefect and Arthur Dent. Dirk Gently did not appear on TV until much later – probably 2010. MC

Many thanks to Shark and Chalicea for an enjoyable puzzle. Shark pulls off a pleasant little trick, namely using his own pseudonym in clues. I've seen this done in puzzles elsewhere in newspapers, but to my knowledge, the only time in these 3D crossword puzzle calendars. It's a nice touch and I like it.

GS

One of my favourite sci-fi authors this month and his best-known stories, so thanks to Shark and Chalicea. I'm just disappointed that ZAPHOD BEEBLEBROX and SLARTIBARTFAST didn't make it into the grid, not to mention the PAN-GALACTIC GARGLEBLASTER! DH

A very pleasant Saturday evening with a Calendar Crossword and Google, which I had to use much more than usual. I didn't know much about Scandinavian music. Now I do. Enjoy the long Easter weekend. PW

Sorry I'm a little late on this one - to be honest I kept putting it off until it was almost too late and then it was. Fortunately when I saw the word "broadcast" I was pretty sure that it was going to be Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, so it was a bit of a romp through! GH

Here's my solution - once I had realised that this was nothing to do with the 153rd anniversaries of Lincoln's abolition of slavery and assassination it wasn't too hard to identify the theme. (Although I hadn't realised that both composers were born in the same year, I did know of the works referred to, though I have never listened to the opera.) The clue on the 14th was particularly neat, and that on the 12th raised a smile :) BW to both, PM

Ed - I note that the range of feedback is broader than usual on this March puzzle and there is some polarisation. As AB observes, it is a very different style of crossword from most daily Guardian puzzles. For some solvers used to Azed and Magpie puzzles, IQ Independent and The Listener, this super March crossword by Shark will be one of the highlights of the year. Other solvers will want to pass on quickly to April. Tastes vary.

One of the challenges of the 3D year is the meeting of a range of setters and grid designs. One of the privileges of directing this slightly bizarre project is to make the choice of my favourite setters. We are a broad church.

I am grateful to Chalicea for providing some Shark background:

*Shark is a top name in the cryptic crossword world. He has been (in partnership with Nudd as Rood) the winner of the Listener Ascot Gold Cup (the award for the year's top crossword) and has also earned the POTY (Puzzle of the Year) award in the Magpie for the puzzle voted favourite by all successful solvers. He is invariably amongst the top Magpie solvers and has been the year's overall top solver. Anyone looking for more Shark puzzles of excellence and distinction could consult the Listener series, the Inquisitor in the i, the Sunday Telegraph's Enigmatic Variations series and the Magpie, where he compiles usually as Shark but occasionally as part of teams (as Bics with Chalicea/Curmudgeon, or as Rood to name just two of them).*

It may be some while before it is safe to go back in the water! If Jill's Twitter brilliant idea takes off or develops in some other ways which get us discussing puzzles without giving the game away, then we are going to get even more enjoyment.

5. Clues & Explanations follow on the next page.

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

Best wishes Eric Westbrook RNIB and 3D Crossword Designer Sirius

Day	SOLUTION	Direction	Clue	Letter Count	Explanation
1	AFFORDS (7)	24ac	Gives one fellow several cars (7)		A F FORDS
2	ANISEED (7)	18ac	Cordial bird set eyes on diamonds (7)		ANI SEE D
3	ANURA (5)	18aw	Amphibia race back surrounded by water-drinkers (5)		RUN< (inside) AA
4	AWARE (5)	22up	Appreciative about ceramics (5)		A WARE
5	DENTS (5)	20aw	Bashes dirty landlord's son grabbing hold of Kat's bottom (5)		DEN 'S (around) (ka)T
6	DIRKING (7)	7ac	Stabbing man following brief obscenity (7)		KING (after) DIR(t)
7	DOGMA (5)	7d	Go mad cracking code (5)		(GO MAD)*
8	DRAM (4)	4d	Nip in local theatre (not early) (4)		(am)DRAM
9	FINER (5)	25up	Higher quality ring, perhaps, having spent \$1000 (5)		FIN(g)ER
10	FRATI (5)	25to	Father to Italy? (5)		FR AT I (&lit)
11	GAPED (5)	9to	Deposit silver in retirement and looked awestruck (5)		(DEP AG)<
12	GENTLER (7)	14ac	Cycling fast in Germany – particularly clement (7)		LENT (cycled) (inside) GER
13	GIRLS (5)	9d	Misses drills intermittently tracking soldier (5)		GI (d)R(i)L(I)S
14	GUTTA-PERCHA (5-6)	14to,10ac	Drop fish to bottom of sea – it's rubbery (5-6)		GUTTA PERCH (se)A
15	IDEAL (5)	19up	Shark's turn to deliver benchmark? (5)		"I DEAL"
16	ILLER (5)	8d	Without cover, gunman is worse (5)		(k)ILLER
17	ISTLE (5)	23up	Key to move tons internally will create fibre (5)		ISLET with T moved inside
18	LEEAR (5)	2aw	Loch Ness deceiver finds shelter on annual return (5)		LEE AR
19	LYTIC (5)	16to	Drunk dumping soldier, causing a breakdown (5)		(para)LYTIC
20	NEAFE (5)	15to	Almost deft, iron fist once (5)		NEA(t) FE
21	PEST (4)	6d-4	Step on bug (4)		STEP*
22	RAISE (5)	26to	Call up cook having lost book (5)		(b)RAISE
23	RASTA (5)	17to	WI calendar: a starkers display (5)		(calenda)R A STA(rkers)
24	SATED (5)	1aw	Full of fruit - dessert primarily exchanged for seconds (5)		DATES (with D and S swapped)
25	TETH (4)	5d	The extent of one's knowledge portrayed without hesitation in foreign letter (4)		TETH(er)
26	TRACTUS (7)	12ac	Psalm from pamphlet as above (7)		TRACT US
27	UNCLE (5)	3d	Obscene ignoring an elderly man (5)		UNCLE(an)
28	URANIAN (7)	21ac	Heavenly queen in Nauru flying back (7)		RANI (inside) NAU<
29	UTERI (5)	3aw	More than one organ's note – practically fine (5)		UT ERI(c)