

NOTES ON LISTENER CROSSWORDS: NUMBERS 3001 –

From *AMERICA* by Brian Winston, 8 FEBRUARY 1990 National Grids

The single best reason for living in America, rather than in, say, Britain, is the crossword puzzles. And before righteous patriotic indignation bubbles over, I invite you, dear reader, simply to turn to page 49 of this distinguished journal where you will find the compelling evidence that I speak the truth. Here is the English crossword at its very worst—elusive, elliptical and élitist. [The puzzle was No 3042, Double Helix by Adam, though it is doubtful that the writer had seen it in advance.] Designed by people too ashamed to use their real names, it induces headaches and feelings of inferiority. It has made me an exile.

[The article continues with a description of American puzzles, with example clues.]

It led to the following:

Letter, 22 FEBRUARY 1990

Cross words

SIR: Brian Winston (*The Listener*, 8 February) writes that the ‘single best reason for living in America, rather than in, say, Britain, is the crossword puzzles’. What nonsense! Anyone in Britain can buy American papers if they wish. My own opinion is the opposite of Mr Winston’s.

Mr Winston also tells me that I am elitist for attempting your own puzzle. Not so. Crosswords are a harmless mental diversion, not to be taken too seriously, at any level of difficulty. I imagine most other solvers would agree.

Geoff Jones

Hitchin

Herts.

Letter, 14 JUNE 1990

Never Lost for Words

SIR: Having left home for a holiday in France before *The Listener* arrived, we had to buy a copy on the way to Dover. Therefore, although we had brought our *Chambers* for the Crossword (17 May [No 3056, At a Loose End by Kea]), we had no way of knowing that we would need the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*. Our tiny Pyrenees village, although it fits the bill for all our holiday requirements, is a ‘cruciverbian’ wilderness. But we made the 100-mile round trip to Perpignan and succeeded in finding a copy of *Antony and Cleopatra* in French, as I knew the quotation we required came from Cleopatra’s speech before her suicide. The word omitted is translated into French as ‘noeud’, meaning ‘knot’, so we plumped for that. [It was the correct answer.]

Mrs K Fowler

Whitefield, Manchester

From *Diary* by Susan Jeffreys (Features Editor) 3 JANUARY 1991

[This was the last edition of *The Listener*, which was the basis for this article.]

But as I roam around the emptying offices my fingers itch at the sight of a battered, indexed note book. It's the code-book for the crossword setters' pseudonyms. The mysteries of The World's Most Difficult Crossword have exerted a strong charm for me. I read through the clues as if they were the impenetrable verse of some Thirties poet; when all the correct entries come in, I am no wiser. I've seen people who can do this crossword—you would pass them in the street and not know you have been in the presence of greatness. If I steal the code-book, the whisper says, I could go to my grave knowing the true identities of Eel, Zag, Nick Louse, Sabre, Klick and Duck.

Crossword No 3089: Squarkode by Klan
(The final puzzle to appear in *The Listener*)

The puzzle carried a box:

“Regular solvers will be sad to hear of the recent death of Klan whose first puzzle appeared in *The Listener* in 1983.”