

AZED CROSSWORD 2636

‘CHRISTMAS CARDS’

1 T. Anderson (CLOWN AROUND): Act in panto perhaps vulgar, not entertaining for everyone (*low + U in non*).

2 A. Whittaker (CHEESEBOARD): What makes a male unusually obese? It can often be the last course (*he + anag.*).

3 P. Sant (CAT’S-CRADLE): Puzzle with intricate instructions, festive at heart, to surmount (*t + scale*).

VHC (extra prizes)

M. Barley (SCATTERED): It’s a seat in front of the telly, perhaps, after dispatching last of festive spread (*s(e)ttee*).

J. G. Booth (CALLING BIRD): One of a quartet in festive song, billing excitedly (*anag.*; *ref. 12 days of Christmas song*).

Dr J. Burscough (CAROLLED): Noël: glee regularly warbled at Christmas (*alternate letters*).

Dr I. S. Fletcher (CHURCHWARDEN): Pipe damage mostly seen when burst follows cold (*hur(t) + c + anag.*).

G. I. L. Grafton (COLD-HEARTED): Lo, the day Ebenezer’s beginning to reform, being so? The opposite (*anag. incl. d, E; ref. Scrooge*).

R. J. Heald (JACARANDA): Christmas’s ending, almost wrapped up by January – reasonable to throw out fir tree (*a in Jan. + (f)a(ir)*).

D. F. Manley (NOEL COWARD): Christmas starts with *Observer*’s wondrously witty wordsmith (*Noel + O, w*).

C. G. Millin (DISACCHARIDE): A sugar cube with cha is stirred in (*anag. in die*).

T. J. Moorey: (CARDINAL): Most important last match France lost (*(F)inal*).

R. Pinnock (CAT’S-CRADLE): Entertainment provided by modulating patterns in string trio’s opening measure (*t + scale*).

N. Roper (CARBONADE): Cook up a bone stew (*anag.*).

T. Rudd (CAROLLED): Firing in shot, Lionel sang for joy (*anag. less in; ref. L. Messi*).

Dr S. J. Shaw (CARPE DIEM): Mince pie before what’s central to December – enjoy the present! (*anag. + em*).

A. J. Shields (CAROTID): Characters leading onto thin ice – a clot getting stuck here could be dangerous (*first letters*).

I. Simpson (CAROLLED): Rendered line for The First Noel? (*anag. with l for N, & lit.*).

P. L. Stone (SCOREBOARD): Brook set about striking ton, third in Pakistan, an exhibition of run-making (*anag. less t, k; ref. Harry B., English test batsman*).

R. C. Teuton (MAXIMUM CARDS): With regular strikes mail entries for UK may go astray along with Xmas postal items (*anag. of m, i, U, m, Xmas*).

Ms S. Wallace (SCATTERGOOD): Prodigal set to go bust (*anag.*).

A. J. Wardrop (SCAREDY-CAT): Faint-hearted type sure to retreat before a lion, say (*yes (rev.) + cat*).

M. Whitmore (PILCHARDS): Suggestions of partygoers included lollipops, hide and seek, and sardines (*first letters*).

HC

P. B. Alldred, D. K. Arnott, D. & N. Aspland, M. Barker, T. C. Borland, Mrs S. Brown, C. A. Clarke, Ms L. Davis, J. Doylend, W. Drever, H. Freeman, R. Gilbert, J. Grimes, A. H. Harker, G. Hart, J. Hood, L. M. Inman, P. Jenkinson (Switzerland), G. Johnstone, M. Lunan, P. W. Marlow, Rev. Prebendary M. R. Metcalf, R. S. Morse, Dr T. G. Powell, W. Ransome, Dr J. B. Reid, C. Short, P. A. Stephenson, D. Thomson, J. Vincent & Ms R. Porter, Mrs A. M. Walden, R. J. Whale, K. & J. Wolff, A. J. Young, R. Zara.

Comments

126 entries and no mistakes. This was a smaller number than I'd ideally have liked for a Christmas special. Having extended the deadline I do hope that all submissions reached me. None have been delivered within the last week or more, so I must conclude that the puzzle proved more difficult than usual. Your comments generally bore this out, though no one complained and most seem to have relished the challenge. I slightly regret the inclusion of LAST CARD and CASTERED among the thematic clues, especially the former, but the temptation to increase the number of special clues was just too strong to resist. Of the rest IN(CAR)NATE(D) proved to be the toughest to spot, but having no unchecked letters meant that it could be entered without being fully understood.

Most (if not quite all) of you welcomed the freedom to choose your own clue word(s), a variation from the norm I turn to only rarely, the last time being in 2014. I thought it might make judging more difficult but this turned out not to be the case though you cast your nets wide, with CAROLLED probably the favourite choice. I hesitated only briefly over CALLING BIRD(S), which is not in Chambers, but its festive relevance and lack of obscurity made it quite acceptable.

A few competitors asked if I accept clues worded as if they may be regarded as leading to 'down' words, especially if, as in this puzzle, they do not appear as either acrosses or downs. I find it difficult to be unequivocal about this, beyond a vague feeling that since the natural way in which language appears in print is arranged from left to right, not from top to bottom, clues should (other things being equal) reflect this. That said, I'm ready to listen to persuasive counter-arguments.