

AZED CROSSWORD 2685

CATTLE-LIFTER

1 Dr I. S. Fletcher: One boning source of beef fillet, butcher's core treat, possibly (*anag. incl. c; bone = steal*).

2 J. Vincent & Ms R. Porter: Provide meal needing little bit of flavouring to be stirred in? I can get away with beef stock (*anag. incl. f in cater*).

3 P. A. Stephenson: I bone neat fillet cooked with claret and a pinch of tarragon (*anag. incl. t*).

VHC

T. Anderson: One poaches beef fillet, cooking a short time in fancy recipe (*anag. + t in cate r*).

D. & N. Aspland: After rifling, cater with fillet and bit of topside? That could be me! (*anag. incl. t, & lit.*).

M. Barley: See duffer with clubs fret badly when getting in a little rough (*anag. in C + anag.; see duffer²*).

T. C. Borland: See little after rum one takes neat (*c + anag.*).

Mrs S. Brown: Craftily leaving nothing behind, little trace of neat thief (*anag. less 0*).

W. Drever: One may take neat filter coffee at first with latte, frappé (*anag. incl. c*).

A. H. Harker: In flagrante delicto with steer, this thief might be mixed up with renegados (*comp. anag. & lit.*).

R. J. Heald: Breaking COVID's no. 1 rule, ex-PM seen to imbibe 'pick-me-up' he illicitly takes neat (*lift in Attlee in C, r; ref. Partygate*).

J. C. Leyland: Get frisky Felix cat litter at cost of nine nicker from farm stall? (*anag. less IX*).

T. J. Moorey: Duff leadership of Tories care little about entry of Farage that could be duffer! (*F in anag. incl. T*).

J. Pearce: I've whipped stock and left it to stew with claret (*anag.*).

A. Plumb: Jersey thief maybe could make Bergerac ultimately fret a little (*anag. incl. c; ref. Jersey-based TV series*).

Dr J. B. Reid: I rustle leaf litter that ultimately gets scattered after start of composting (*c + anag. incl. t*).

R. C. Teuton: Excitedly alter effort for out of sight & lit – following C. Dexter's one of my targets (*C + anag. less for; see dexter²*).

A. J. Wardrop: One bagging stock car title felt fantastic (*anag.*).

D. Whisstock (Italy): Fella after a lot of livestock – even ones roaming (*anag. of alternate letters, & lit.*).

K. & J. Wolff: Might one take stock before rebranding, ordering a refit, new tills etc., discarding spoilt wines? (*anag. less anag.*).

HC

D. Appleton, J. Bartlett, J. M. Brown, T. Clement, N. Connaughton (Ireland), P. Finan, G. I. L. Grafton, S. D. Griew, P. F. Henderson (New Zealand), S. Hicks, L. M. Inman,

G. Johnstone, P. W. Marlow, P. McKenna, Rev. Prebendary M. R. Metcalf, C. Ogilvie, D. Ogilvie, Dr T. G. Powell, W. Ransome, T. Rudd, P. Sant, Dr S. J. Shaw, I. Simpson, P. L. Stone, Prof. M. O. J. Thomas (New Zealand), Mrs A. M. Walden, Ms S. Wallace, L. Ward (USA), T. West-Taylor, R. J. Whale, A. Whittaker, R. Zara.

Comments

133 entries, and no mistakes that I spotted, in a puzzle generally regarded as being of average difficulty. Of the 16 clues voted favourite the narrow winner was ‘Missing the cooler theatre garb’ (SCRUBS). I was gently reproved by one regular for including SAMBO in the grid, having decided that its second entry in C (unconnected in origin to the first) was fair game and excused me from being criticized for using a racially offensive term, something I would never consciously do. Less easy to excuse was a couple of my recent clues to short words forming other words when read backwards and (this is the point) not making it unambiguous which were the answers to be entered. When one is working under pressure this trap is an easy one to fall into inadvertently, but I firmly believe that it weakens any clue where it’s used and should be avoided. I’m told that my recent lapses were discussed on internet websites, so now you know where I stand and I shall endeavour to mend my ways!

This month’s clue word was generally popular, for all its oddity. Much use was made of such defining phrases as ‘take stock’, and ‘duffer’ was also a happy find (in thesauruses, I guess). ‘Neat’ is always a usefully ambiguous definition for any bovine creature, despite its ‘(*archaic* or *dialect*)’ label in C. (If it were only labelled *archaic* I would prefer this to be indicated in some way, if only to show that you’d considered this aspect in a competitive context. The *dialect* register does at least show that a term is in current use.)

No more for now, with two more competitions following shortly. My thanks for the many Christmas cards I’ve received from solvers, addressed to me and my family. May I wish you all in return a very happy festive season, and may we all hope for happier days worldwide in the coming year.