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THE  TIMES

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 30 2017

## Puzzles

Last Saturday, our London Bridge offices played host to some truly dazzling displays of mental dexterity. The country's best sudoku solvers assembled en masse for the 2017 Times National Sudoku Championship.

Following two preliminary rounds, the 12 fastest error-free solvers were pitted against each other in the grand final. The three entrants we picked as favourites in last week's newsletter (Tom Collyer, George Danker and Nina Rowe) all progressed safely to the final along with the multiple Times National Crossword champion, Mark Goodliffe, and last year's runner-up, Ned Walker.

Incredibly, Tom finished all four puzzles in just 16 minutes, almost ten minutes faster than the next finisher. While the remaining finalists struggled to finish

the fiendish foursome, he was left to ponder whether his sensational time had been at the cost of accuracy.

However, once the final scores were collated, the markers confirmed four faultless solutions, and Tom was announced as the Times National Sudoku champion for a record fourth time. Second place went to Madeleine Jacob and third place to Ned.

You can see if you can beat Tom's amazing time by printing the puzzles at the following link: [Grand Final Puzzles](#)

Check your solutions here: [Grand Final Solutions](#)

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**David Parfitt**

Puzzles Editor

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## Clues of the week

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The *Times* crossword editor, Richard Rogan, selects his five favourite clues from this week's Quick Cryptic puzzles. (Solutions and explanations below)

**1** Friendly, minutes after fighting (4)

*No 925, Monday, September 25*

**2** Miss sign? (5)

*No 926, Tuesday, September 26*

**3** In which all but one in party stand to lose their seats  
(7,6)

*No 927, Wednesday, September 27*

**4** No mileage in this sect's remit? My! Strange (6,6)

*No 928, Thursday, September 28*

**5** What helps one remember to snatch a rest (9)

*No 929, Friday, September 29*

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## Questions of the week

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Our pick of last week's questions from Olav Bjortomt's fiendish Daily Quiz. (Answers below)

**1** *Ethnologue* is an encyclopaedic reference work cataloging all of the world's known what?

**2** Noachian, Hesperian and Amazonian are geological periods on which planet?

**3** On the Fahrenheit temperature scale, water boils at how many degrees?

**4** Lady Diana Spencer (1710-35) almost married which Prince of Wales?

**5** This is the Alpine species of which rodent in the squirrel family?



# Crossword Clue Writing Contest

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The latest from the *Sunday Times* Crossword Clue Writing Contest. Peter Biddlecombe, the *Sunday Times* crossword editor, applies his critical eye to the entries and reports on the best and most thought-provoking clues.

## **Winner of Clue Writing Contest No 1653: BLUE PENCIL**

John Whitehead, EC2Y

**Clue:** Depressed pound and initially Chancellor is led to make cuts

[definition = to make cuts; wordplay = BLUE

(Depressed) + PEN (pound) + C I L (first letters of "Chancellor is led")]

For a full report on the above contest, visit:

[sundaytimes.co.uk/cluewriting](http://sundaytimes.co.uk/cluewriting)

## **Sunday Times Clue Writing Contest No 1676: CLEANER**

Readers are invited to compose their own clues for the answer above. Clues must be original and cryptic, of a

standard similar to those in the *Sunday Times* Crossword. Email your entry to [puzzle.entries@sunday-times.co.uk](mailto:puzzle.entries@sunday-times.co.uk). The contest closes on Monday, October 9, and the best entry wins £20.

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## Mark My Words

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Mark My Words is our regular caption competition in *The Sunday Times*. This week, readers are invited to guess what was said when the baker Mary Berry herded sheep over London Bridge to mark the opening of the city's Wool Fair.



Send your entries to: [puzzle.entries@sunday-times.co.uk](mailto:puzzle.entries@sunday-times.co.uk) by no later than Tuesday. Entries should include a postal address, and 'Mark My Words 75' in the subject line of the email. The best entry as judged by *The Sunday Times* will win *The Chambers Dictionary of Great Quotations* (full terms and conditions below).

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The winning caption for last week's picture of an honour guard of Chinese troops, was: "Watch where you're putting those bayonets!" It came from Alan Burnett of Edinburgh.

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## Head Scratcher

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We have reduced five film titles and their stars to their initials only. Can you work out the full forms? (Solutions below)

- 1 GWTW starred CG and VL
  - 2 TKS starred CF and HBC
  - 3 AAE starred BD
  - 4 FWAAF starred HG and AM
  - 5 OTW starred MB
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## Solutions

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### Clues of the week

- 1 WARM [definition = Friendly; wordplay = M (minutes) after WAR (fighting)]
- 2 VIRGO [deceptive definition]
- 3 MUSICAL CHAIRS [deceptive definition]
- 4 METRIC SYSTEM [definition = No mileage in this; wordplay = anagram of SECTS REMIT MY]
- 5 REMAINDER [definition = rest; wordplay = REMINDER (What helps one remember) around A]

### Questions of the week

- 1 Living languages
- 2 Mars
- 3 212
- 4 Frederick, George II's eldest son
- 5 Marmot (*Marmota marmota*)

## Head Scratcher

1 *Gone with the Wind* — Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh

2 *The King's Speech* — Colin Firth and Helena Bonham Carter

3 *All About Eve* — Bette Davis

4 *Four Weddings and a Funeral* — Hugh Grant and Andie MacDowell

5 *On the Waterfront* — Marlon Brando

## Mark My Words terms and conditions

Competition closes at midnight on Tuesday. Over 18, residents of the UK and ROI only. One entry per person.

The winner will be the best entry as judged by *The Sunday Times*. No cash alternative to prize in whole or in part. Prize is non-transferable. Your information will only be used for the purposes of this competition.

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