

CHARITY CHRISTMAS PUZZLE 2024

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Welcome

This year marks the 34th annual Christmas Puzzle I have set to raise money for charities. The Puzzle receives entries from Australia, New Zealand, Cyprus, Malta and Ireland plus a team entry from France and Sweden for whom the Puzzle is in their second language. The Puzzle should appeal to people who enjoy solving quality newspaper crossword puzzles and this one is designed to help you finish - the Puzzle has an underlying theme so that, when things start to get a bit tough, you should get more information to help you. Over the years the Puzzle has raised almost £135,000 distributed among 100 good causes, including a donation of £8,000 last year. As a result of this and other activities I was awarded a British Empire Medal as part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Birthday Honours.

Prize money – Every entrant could be a winner!

Everyone who enters will be entered into a draw to win one of five prizes, each of £10. In addition, I will award three prizes each of £50 to the three highest scorers; if there are more than three potential winners I will conduct a draw.

Charities

As usual, I will forward all the money you donate, except for the prize-money, to charity. The resulting money raised will be distributed equally between **St Mary's, Eaton Bray**, where I am the Reader, and four other charities – **Lupus UK, National Deaf Children's Society, Parkinsons,** and **The Joy Foundation**. All the charities have been nominated by Puzzlers from the UK. I do hope you will be generous in your donations, supporting the work of these charities (see next page) - last year the average donation was over £20.

The Puzzle

As usual, the puzzle is made up of 40 clues that narrate a story. Each clue contains three definitions that lead to three answers and for each of these answers you are given the position of some of the letters to help you. The number of remaining letters to be found for each word is indicated by dashes. An example could be as given below.

_____ ERR _____ _____ RIN _ ___ UTA _____

Sea/sons / greetings

The answers being MEDITERRANEAN, OFFSPRING, SALUTATIONS although having markers to show where each definition begins and ends makes things a little easier than the actual puzzle.

All answers, except for various proper nouns, are as defined in Chambers Dictionary. (Don't expect to find all the words in Concise Chambers or Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary. Expect a few really obscure words - but 90-100 of the answers should be in many peoples' vocabulary.) In setting the puzzle I try to run one definition into the next; occasionally this has required the use of a linking word or conjunction. In most cases these should be fairly obvious - no clues in the puzzle start with a conjunction. Do not assume that punctuation, spacing or context can be relied upon to be helpful - it may be safer to assume the opposite.

Part of the pleasure for me in setting the Puzzle, and for you doing it, is to try to get you thinking so please don't be disappointed if the use of an electronic dictionary doesn't immediately provide you with all the answers.

As usual, I shall be strict on spellings that are not found in Chambers and will only mark the answer you present in the spaces provided; you won't be penalised for valid alternative words to those I am expecting you to find. You may find that some answers defeat you and you end up with what seems only a moderate score. Nevertheless, please send in your entry with a donation - otherwise you will have had your fun for nothing and the good causes will not benefit; whatever your score you could still be a prize-winner. Anyway, it's the taking part that matters, not the winning. In judging the entries my decision will be final - even when I am wrong.

This year's theme

I hope to help you complete the Puzzle by providing information about the starting letters. Please read the introduction on Page 1 of the Puzzle – you will find the Puzzle more difficult (impossible?) if you don't use this information, which, once you have filled in enough definite answers, should enable you to deduce the starting letters of all 120 answers in their correct positions.

Christmas Puzzle on the Web

Electronic copies of the Puzzle can be downloaded from www.ChristmasPuzzle.uk. This site will also be used to warn you of any errors found in the puzzle. You can also see some of the wonderful words the Puzzle has used over the years, the Rolls of Honour and a record of your previous scores. Within 2 weeks of submitting your entry I will have marked your entry and you can find out your score for this year.

A further feature on the website is the ability for you or your friends to register to receive next year's Puzzle electronically. You can do this at any time during the year by submitting your email address and you will automatically be sent an electronic copy of the Puzzle on 8 December. Once you have registered you will receive a copy each year unless you notify me otherwise – obviously if you change your email address you will need to re-register.

Distribution to friends

The aim of the Puzzle is to raise as much as possible for the good causes so please feel free to distribute it to your friends - take a photocopy, download a copy from the website or contact me.

Returning your entry

Please try to ensure that I receive your entry by **Sunday 5 February 2025**; the draw to select winners will be made on the following Sunday and all entries received by that day will qualify. Historically many Puzzlers have made their donation by cheque but as with so much of this modern world things are changing rapidly. The banks don't necessarily help and I now incur a charge for every cheque paid in; it will therefore aid the charities if you can use BACS transfer. If you are doing this for the first time you should note that, at the request of my bank, the account I use for temporarily holding donations, called 'Gordon Gray Charity Account, is a Business, not a Personal Account.

I aim to return marked entries, with solutions, by the end of February. Best wishes to you all for a happy and peaceful Christmas and a successful New Year, not least in solving the puzzle.

CHARITY DETAILS

Lupus UK: The only national registered charity supporting people with systemic lupus and discoid lupus and assisting those approaching diagnosis. The charity has over 5500 members and a number of Regional Groups around the UK who arrange medical talks, publish local newsletters, set up local occasions and organise fundraising events. LUPUS UK also operates a strong Grant Programme for research purposes and welfare. Charity No. 1200671. www.lupusuk.org.uk

Parkinsons: Your donation will mean we can keep providing tailored information and support, campaigning for fairer treatment and funding the most promising research to find a cure. www.parkinsons.org.uk

National Deaf Children's Society: The leading charity for deaf children and young people. We're here to support every deaf child who needs us. www.ndcs.org.uk

The Joy Foundation: A Christian charity helping children to flourish in schools in and around Lincoln, through Collective Worship, lessons, clubs, mentoring and more. Please visit our website at www.joyfoundation.org.uk for more details.

St Mary's, Eaton Bray: A church that celebrated its 800th anniversary in 2019 and where Gordon is Reader. Charity No:1129952. www.stmaryseatonbray.org.uk.

CHARITY CHRISTMAS PUZZLE 2024

T _ _ / G _ _ _ _ / B _ _ _ _ _ / B _ _ _ o _ _

This year's theme: The Puzzle's title provides clues to the starting letters. Reading top to bottom 6, 7, 7 words, or parts of words, relating to the theme are in alphabetical order. In one column follow the instruction. Answers to the Puzzle include 11 words (all proper nouns) that do not have a definition in Chambers.

The Puzzle once again includes homophone definitions; for example, an answer might be defined by 'pair'; possible answers could include 'COUPLE', 'AVOCADO' and 'SHAVE'. In total the Puzzle has 8 homophone definitions – Questions 1 to 5, 6 to 10, 11 – 15, etc., each contain one such definition.

__ ROA __ __ RAC __ __ TIN __
1. Anywhere foreign is an appealing place to go for ...

__ ZIN __ __ OLA __ __ ANG __
2. Lying exposed to the sun's rays on the terrace of Henman Hill in ...

__ WHO __ __ AIN __ __ URE __
3. ... Butler's imaginary country, staying for time off work with ...

__ NTH __ __ EKD __ __ RPO __
4. ... a bad tempered woman any day bar Sunday. George Best, John Lennon and Robin Hood, ...

__ OGE __ __ NCU __ __ IEU __
5. all things considered, were B9 former mates and ...

__ RMA __ __ OME __ __ YTH __
6. ... usually good fellows who are easily recognised in Scotland going ...

__ ALC __ __ AME __ __ QUE __
7. ... barefooted. The state capital of California on the Rio Grande ...

__ TEB __ __ EHI __ __ MAG __
8. ... whose airport was raided by the Israelis in 1976 is where the queen may be in residence, and is where I ...

__ EAL __ __ RET __ __ GLE __
9. ... discovered (a rare) hammerhead shark ...

__ THI __ __ NUG __ __ LUE __
10. ... swimming down the polluted water that ...

__ IRC __ __ OON __ __ ERW __
11. ... goes round the shallow lake by the sea. Later this ...

__ CAD __ __ GON __ __ NYG __
12. ... blackish green monster fish, usually found off the SE coast of Australia ...

__ HOT __ __ TLA __ __ YPH __
13. ... was filmed for a second time by Robin Hood, Billy the Kid, Jesse James and the Rolling Stone that always provided work for him and ...

__ NKE __ __ FER __ __ INE __
14. ... Mary Shelley's hero was given errands to run so missed ...

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___ AIN ___ ___ SOD ___ ___ GAT ___
15. ... the rest of the incident .”Altogether,” Spenser said,

___ PTY ___ RIT ___ ___ EABLE
16. ... the “team deserved a pleasant ...

___ NER ___ AVA ___ ___ STI ___
17. ... meal”; the first drink was a white wine with egg yolks, lemon, spices, etc. ...

___ UED ___ ITI ___ ___ RAD ___
18. ... followed by a starter of golden salmon, ...

___ OUL ___ ___ ICC ___ ___ EKE ___
19. ... served with the fish, a sauce made with eggs, herbs, capers, etc, and a purple leaved salad that refreshes the parts others can’t reach. ...

___ DIA ___ ___ MOS ___ ___ AIN ___
20. ... Without delay, a sparkling wine was procured ...

___ ELE ___ ___ SIP ___ ___ LEA ___
21. ... A foul broth with no definite flavour was so disagreeable that ...

___ CHE ___ ___ EED ___ ___ TIS ___
22. ... the staff where the food was cooked swiftly compensated us by ...

___ MBL ___ ___ ONC ___ ___ YON ___
23. ... bringing down an Italian liqueur for all of us. We ...

___ CUR ___ ___ RES ___ ___ MAI ___
24. ... people of refined and fastidious taste for coffee stayed for a ...

___ MME ___ ___ GAR ___ ___ UTE ___
25. ... large glass of sweet white wine. ...

___ RNI ___ ___ GUI ___ ___ SIP ___
26. ... The hours from dusk till dawn, overcome with languor, were squandered until ...

___ REA ___ ___ SEM ___ ___ SIO ___
27. ... dawn – a group of musicians playing together – now and then ...

___ USI ___ ___ NEL ___ ___ KED ___
28. ... stopping briefly, really exhausted. By ...

___ EVE ___ ___ DIG ___ ___ URI ___
29. ... after 10 we were in need and hungry for ...

___ TZI ___ ___ OLO ___ ___ OSE ___
30. ... a Greek dish of black tea, (not ...

___ ROS ___ ___ ACK ___ ___ UBL ___
31. ... iced according to Spenser) made a snack. The party was ...

___ OLE ___ ___ ELI ___ ___ DST ___
32. ... Imbued with a new lease of life by any standard of measurement. But,

___ ORT ___ ___ IVI ___ ___ NTI ___
33. ... I’m sorry to say, one of our group was missing; We

NAM _ _ _ _ _ OND _ _ _ _ ONT _ _ _
34. ... called the family group of Alan, Wayne, Merrill and Jay in Alberta ...

_ _ _ _ EST _ _ _ _ _ SON _ _ _ _ ERE _ _
35. ... "Where is Martin Hussingtree," a London columnist. in tears, ...

_ _ _ _ EAL _ _ _ _ _ ARC _ _ _ _ _ CKI _ _ _
36. ... asked. We explored all over and fortunately our...

_ _ _ _ EKI _ _ _ _ _ NDO _ _ _ _ _ LEA _ _ _
37. ... special friend, by chance, was seen in ...

_ _ _ _ LEY _ _ _ _ _ ELE _ _ _ _ _ MPT _ _ _ _
38. ... a big toy store. Perpetually young it was something we took for granted, but ...

_ _ _ _ PTI _ _ _ _ _ IDE _ _ _ _ _ IND _ _ _ _
39. ... this was an unusual event that caused us to remember we must ...

_ _ _ _ ART _ _ _ _ _ ETT _ _ _ _ _ ORR _ _ _ _
40. ... leave for a city in Louisiana when, according to Annie, the sun'll come out.

ENTRY FORM

Please try to ensure that I receive all entries by Sunday 5 February 2025.
To: Gordon Gray, Oakins, 9 Eaton Bray Rd, Northall, Dunstable, Beds, LU6 2EU

From: NAME
ADDRESS
(Block capitals
please)
POSTCODE
E Mail address

Entry may be by CASH, CHEQUE or ELECTRONIC TRANSFER (**Please circle the method chosen**).
I will be grateful for any donation, but, for your information, the average donation last year was over £25.
My donation is
Make cheques payable to 'Gordon Gray Charity Account'.
Electronic Transfer to SORT CODE: 40-28-12, ACC NO: 51495550, REFERENCE: Your postcode

- Please tick this box if you would like your marked entry, a copy of the puzzle solution, names of winners etc. and have enclosed a s.a.e. for that purpose. The solutions will be distributed around the end of February. Note: the answers will not be posted on the website.
- Please tick this box if you have registered (or are already registered) on www.christmaspuzzle.co.uk to receive an electronic copy of next year's Puzzle
- Please tick this box if you would like to receive a paper copy of next year's puzzle and have enclosed a s.a.e. for that purpose
- Please tick this box if you have a friend or relative who would like to take part next year and have enclosed a s.a.e. with his/her name and address for that purpose.

N.B. Self-sealing envelopes are very helpful to me.