

No fish on Fridays

BRIAN FAGAN, former Rugby schoolboy and professor emeritus of anthropology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, reckons it was the ravenous appetite of Christians for fish on Fridays, not the market for spices, that led sailors from Bristol to undertake the hazardous but potentially fabulously lucrative voyages to north America in the 1490s. In his rollicking *Fish on Friday: Feasting, Fasting and the Discovery of the New World* Fagan – himself a keen amateur sailor – describes how, as early as the Middle Ages, a transatlantic fishing industry was developing salting and smoking to preserve fish during the return trip bearing heavy cargoes of herring and cod for the tables of the pious Catholics of western Europe.

“When fish stocks in the North Sea declined during the early fifteenth century, English fishers sailed northward to southern Iceland,” Fagan explains. “Bristol was a natural centre for the burgeoning fish trade. It lay close to the French and Spanish fish markets. With astronomical profits in prospect, there was also a greater willingness to venture far off-



shore in search of unknown fisheries. We knew that Bristol entrepreneurs dispatched ships westward long before John and Sebastian Cabot set sail. The ships returned, but, alas, there are only a handful of fleeting clues about what they did in the west. The sea captains and sponsors were close-mouthed about their discoveries. Cod were a very profitable cargo, and they were far more interested in profit than exploration.”

The cod fisheries generated more profits, it is said, than all the gold extracted from the Americas. The huge rewards came from

Gadus morhua, the North Atlantic cod, easily salted and like honey to Europe’s devout, who abstained from eating meat on Fridays, holy days, and during Lent.

The Church defines meat as the flesh of warm-blooded animals, which is why eating fish is permitted. As well as eggs and dairy products, all other cold-blooded animals may also be eaten, such as frogs, turtles, and snails. Just thought you might like to know.

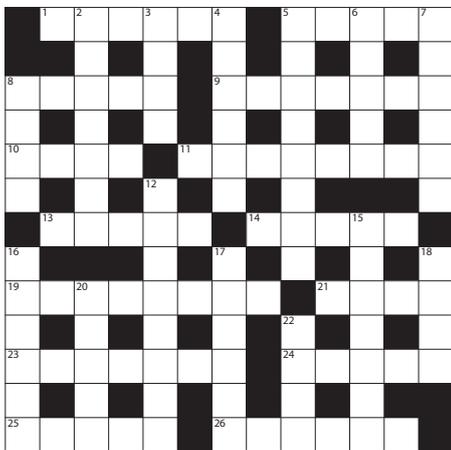
NATIONAL FISH AND CHIPS day is on 7 June – it’s always the first Friday of June, apparently. Fridays are still the busiest day of the week for fish and chips shops, Fridays in Lent in particular – and Good Friday is the busiest day of the year.

Now fish and chips shops are closing. Owners had been turning to contactless deliveries of take-away fish suppers: customers order on line and use “click-and-collect” services. “They call the shop, place their order and pay by card over the phone; they park in our car park and we bring the order out and place it on the roof. There is no contact for anybody. It’s just those in the shop and we clean and disinfect the shop every day,” one fish shop owner explains.

But that shop, too, has shut its doors this week.

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 700 Enigma



Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 28 March, The Tablet, 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0GY. Email: thetablet@thetablet.co.uk, with Crossword in the subject field. Please include your full name, telephone number and email address, and a mailing address. Three books – on God, Miracles and Pilgrimage – from the OUP’s Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random on Wednesday 8 April. The answers to this week’s puzzles and the crossword winner’s name will appear in the 18 April issue.

Prizes kindly donated by

OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

www.oup.com

Across

- 1 (& 8 Acr) Assessing shoplifters’ activities (6, 5)
- 5 A vulgar amount (5)
- 8 (See 1 Acr) (5)
- 9 He’d brought back the knowledge I quoted from the horse’s mouth (7)
- 10 Cast your vote for prohibition (4)
- 11 A prime minister joins the ayes to the right, producing comic poems (3,5)
- 13 The philosopher chap brought back what 22 Down needed (5)
- 14 The publicity is likely to change with the times (5)
- 19 The only kind of path a bishop can take (8)
- 21 Small group of musicians ends concert in Brazil (4)

- 23 Tall, with a bit of a wobble, involved in golf and basketball (3,4)
- 24 Thin porridge spilled on a gun (5)
- 25 Eliminate reference to a phoney seer (5)
- 26 Shake Mr Sheep with talk of a Napoleonic battle (6)

Down

- 2 See an early Christian steal round by the river (7)
- 3 Things look black in Kerry, which has lost heart (4)
- 4 An Indian takes in points made by an Italian (6)
- 5 European royalty in a sinister supermarket (8)
- 6 Up to her if she wants to be different (5)

- 7 A cruel person was unhappy to begin with (6)
- 8 A holy prayer will bring salvation (4)
- 12 Do home improvements for the five who dined south of an American city (8)
- 15 A soldier’s article on a South American country is found in Italy (7)
- 16 See her stupidly dote on half the team! (6)
- 17 Neglected land causes an accident with painful consequences (6)
- 18 Publicity about the rings isn’t very good (4)
- 20 Where Greeks went out to discuss an alternative to a cooker (5)
- 22 This Russian cannot take a stand (4)

SUDOKU | Challenging

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 7 | | 8 | | | 5 |
| 1 | | 2 | | 7 | | |
| 5 | | 3 | | | 4 | 1 |
| | | 4 | 5 | | | 8 |
| 3 | | | 1 | | | 5 |
| | | | | | 6 | 8 |
| | | | | | | 9 |
| 9 | | | | | 1 | |
| | | 8 | | | | 2 |

Each 3x3 box, each row and each column must contain all the numbers 1 to 9.

Solution to the 7 March puzzle

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 9 | 1 |
| 5 | 3 | 9 | 6 | 8 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 7 |
| 1 | 2 | 7 | 9 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 8 |
| 6 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 4 | 1 | 3 |
| 9 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 8 | 5 |
| 3 | 8 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 9 |
| 2 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 9 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 4 |
| 4 | 6 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 9 | 5 | 2 |
| 7 | 9 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 6 |

Solution to the 7 March crossword No. 697

Across: 7 Radii; 8 Alabama; 10 Trivial; 11 Lotus; 12 A sad affair; 16 Brainstorm; 20 Opted; 21 Sabbath; 23 Boer War; 24 Ababa.
Down: 1 Tritite; 2 Addis; 3 Fiji; 4 Pallid; 5 Falls for; 6 Mantrap; 9 Absurd; 13 Sent down; 14 Absorb; 15 Castled; 17 Tasers; 18 Cabal; 19 Cheat; 22 Bead. **Winner:** Miss Carol Weld, of Harpenden, Hertfordshire.