

WORD FROM THE CLOISTERS

diary@thetablet.co.uk

The long distance runner

THE DETAILS of his military career are, necessarily, murky. Dark and disturbing rumours swirl around the activities of the British army's intelligence-gathering units in the blood-strewn Belfast of the 1970s. It's impossible not to wonder at the operation of divine grace in the life of an intelligence officer who engaged in hand-to-hand psychological warfare with the IRA, and then, over 45 years later, only two years before his death, asked to be received into the Catholic Church.

Godfrey Rowland Burt was born in 1932 in Southampton, where his father, Gabriel, served in a military hospital and his mother, Phyllis, was a Red Cross nurse. Leaving school at 14, Burt soon enlisted. He was eventually transferred to the Parachute Regiment, and before being posted to Northern Ireland in 1971 he had served in Cyprus, Suez, Aden and Hong Kong. By this time he had changed his name, preferring to be known as Gordon, or "Gordie" to family and close friends.

Once captain of the army cross-country team and supremely fit, one Sunday morning, boldly asserting their territorial rights, Burt



and two of his NCOs went for a run the length and breadth of nationalist Ardoyne, unarmed and wearing sweatshirts emblazoned with the words "3rd Bn Parachute Regiment". Burt coolly asserted that all would be well as it was "too early for the bad lads, and only the good lads go to church". In the obituary it published last week, *The Times* printed a photo of Burt running past the Holy Cross Catholic Church on the Crumlin Road just as Mass was finishing; nearly fifty years later, it is still thought wise to pixellate the face of the other Para in the picture.

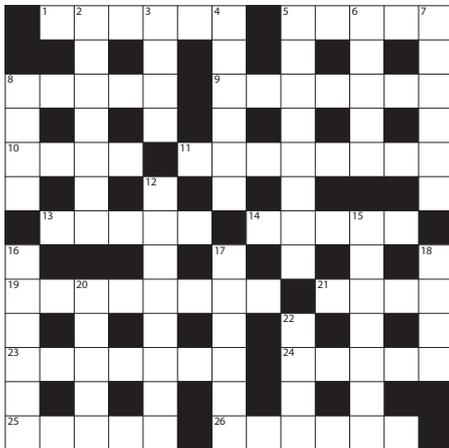
Burt was awarded the Military Cross for his gallant service in Northern Ireland. Diligent in all things, after he became a Catholic, he read his prayer book every morning. He died after a stroke on 4 March, aged 88.

IT'S NEARLY a year since we had news of our occasional contributor Kevin Whelan, "Moycullen's greatest roadsweeper poet", as he put it on the back of the envelope that arrived this morning. Kev's letters have a way of spilling over onto the back of their pouch. Moycullen is a Gaeltacht village seven miles outside Galway City, and during the Covid storm Kev swapped his roadsweeper's brush for a mop, working as a cleaner in the regional hospital. But the cleaning has gone, and the sweeping too. "I simply couldn't do it anymore. My back is banjaxed, my knee not the best, and I am tired all the time. Plus, a new low for me, I was given a written warning for chatting to the patients."

Kevin has barely cobbled together a poem this year. "I'm starting to get mini panic attacks at night. What I call the constant Money Fear is at the root of it. It's like being smothered; and the more you fight it the worse it gets." The end of lockdown can't come soon enough.

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 751 Engima



Across

- 1 The Barber of Seville (6)
- 5 Romantic character in pilots' alphabet (5)
- 8 Pádraig ----- (1881-1972), Irish poet, novelist, playwright (5)
- 9 "Idle -----", music for solo marimba, by Paul Lansky (7)
- 10 Triangular piece of material used in making garments, sails or umbrellas (4)
- 11 A member of the family *Hominidae* (5,3)
- 13 It can be described as (for example) bistatic, monopulse, passive or doppler (5)
- 14 2008 film set in violent 1970s Northern Ireland (5)
- 19 Said to be the only vegetable with all the protein of milk, eggs and meat (4 4)

21 For -----, with *Love and Squalor*

- (Salinger) (4)
- 23 Second son of Joseph and Asenath (Genesis) (7)
- 24 Thermionic valve with two electrodes (5)
- 25 Fleshy protuberance on a turkey's forehead (5)
- 26 "Our hearts will know -- ---- until they rest in Thee" (2,4)
- 2 Setting of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (7)

Down

- 3 Fictional firm whose products were used in cartoons such as *Road Runner* (4)
- 4 City whose motto is *Fortis est Veritas* (6)
- 5 Original name of Shannon Airport (8)

- 6 Village with girl's name (Co. Down, Ireland) (5)
- 7 Saltwater bivalve mollusc (6)
- 8 Surname used professionally by Nicolas Kim Coppola (4)
- 12 Old name for left-hand side of ship (8)
- 15 Consisting of, or turned into, bone (7)
- 16 Their species is *populus tremula* (6)
- 17 ----- Miranda, the "Brazilian bombshell", popular from 1930s to 1950s (6)
- 18 Name by which Edson Arantes do Nascimento is better known (4)
- 20 Member of an unpleasant tribe (*Gulliver's Travels*) (5)
- 22 Poland's third longest river (4)

Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 10 April, 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 Augustine, Christianity and Thomas Aquinas – from the OUP's Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random. **■ We cannot process entries or prizes at present. Please keep entering. Winners will be notified and prizes awarded as soon possible.**

SUDOKU | Challenging

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

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

Solution to the 20 March puzzle

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

Solution to the 20 March crossword No. 748

Across: 7 Naiads; 8 Shinto; 10 Integer; 11 Vireo; 12 Haka; 13 Idiot; 17 Boots; 18 Cain; 22 Koala; 23 Opossum; 24 Pinyin; 25 Marius.
Down: 1 Insight; 2 Mistake; 3 Adage; 4 Shavuot; 5 Andre; 6 Gogol; 9 Tradition; 14 Somatic; 15 Parsnip; 16 Animism; 19 Skype; 20 Banns; 21 Modal

Prizes kindly donated by
OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS
www.oup.com