

WORD FROM THE CLOISTERS

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Blessed are the clever

NOVELIST AND children's author Jill Paton Walsh died last month at the age of 83. Her self-published novel *Knowledge of Angels* – half-fable, half-parable and rather hard work – was shortlisted for the 1994 Booker Prize (a vintage year: George Mackay Brown also made the final six and one of the judges later dismissed the winner, James Kelman's *How Late It Was, How Late*, as "crap").

The devout daughter of "nominally Catholic" parents, Paton Walsh had what she described as a "crummy" convent education in north Finchley. "Remember, Gillian", one nun told her, "there is no beatitude 'Blessed are the clever'." Undeterred, she got into Oxford, where she fell under the spell of Iris Murdoch. She wrote a number of successful books for children before her first adult novel, the excruciatingly autobiographical and now entirely forgotten *Lapsing*, in 1987.

Lapsing centres on Tessa, a daily Massgoer from a working-class background who is studying English at Oxford in the 1950s and joins a "cell" of intense young Catholic students who meet each week to discuss theology, mentored by a "slight, red-haired and beautiful" young priest, Fr Theodore. When the lavishly



guilt-ridden Theodore falls in love with her, Tessa, a good Catholic girl striving for the priest's happiness, offers a love without sin, a "marriage of true minds". Preferring to be good rather than happy, Tessa marries an earnest but dull Catholic student. The tortured Fr Theodore leaves the priesthood and marries someone less complicated. Appalled and miserable, Tessa's faith is punctured forever.

They don't write them like that anymore. Paton Walsh said later: "Somehow I always knew it would be my first subject as an adult writer, and I needed, it turned out, a quarter

of a century to distance myself enough to see the story in it, and to write it without tears." It's long out of print of course but easy enough to get second-hand online. It's good.

BRIAN MORTON, who writes for *The Tablet* from Scotland, has interviewed everybody at least once. So we obviously asked him for his Sean Connery story.

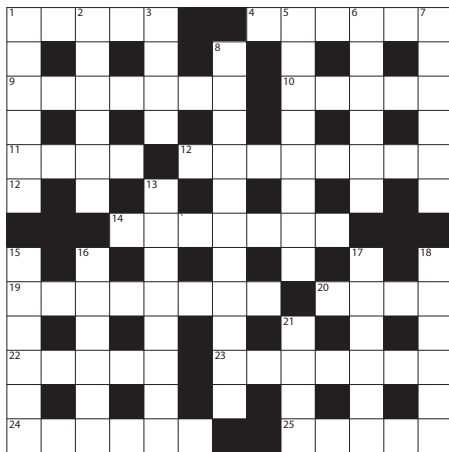
"Yes," Morton confessed. "I did interview Connery once, quite briefly, when *Entrapment* came out in 1999, and made a complete hames of it. He arrived in spectacularly bad mood, but was slightly mollified to hear that I was Scottish and knew about James Braid and Tommy Armour (though Connery didn't know that Tommy was the inventor of the term 'yips' for that handicap-multiplying inability to let go and strike a putt cleanly).

"But when I made a comment about one of his 'filmsh' I got what my grandmother would call the 'north eye'. Having become self-or shelf-conscious, I asked Connery whether he'd minded that he wasn't Ian Fleming's idea of James Bond. By this stage, he was pretty sure I was at it and was clearly trying to make up his mind whether to hit me or laugh along."

Fortunately for us, Connery plumped for the latter.

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 731 Alanus



Across

- 1 See 25 Across
- 4 Out of chaos Waldstein discovered Northumbrian king and saint (6)
- 9 Becoming as one if shared link with St Bernadine (2,5)
- 10 About fifty-one with first-century saint's memorial (5)
- 11 A very small letter? (4)
- 12 Open drape and joy turns to danger (8)
- 14 Version of "Noel" at one of ten interesting pedicurist (7)
- 19 Suit fast time changes for musician (8)
- 20 Travel with little weight in Mediterranean island (4)
- 22 St Isabel's link with a bee (5)

- 23 In Devon river example of reference to alien biblical scholar (7)
- 24 Chap soundly endeavouring to be sincere (6)
- 25 (& 1 Across): Nearly defeated man in prayer? (2,3,5)

Down

- 1 China clay concoction of an oil with potassium (6)
- 2 Zaire saint about to drop me for substitute (6)
- 3 European politicians return to complete Tallis' "in Alium" (4)
- 5 Angelic types with mobile card in pub after time (8)
- 6 Enticing ability of whole office suffix (6)

- 7 Creative lady caught inside revealing poetic foot (6)
- 8 Piece of fishing tackle requiring prayer for success? (11)
- 13 After midnight to sing about times of Matins and Lauds (8)
- 15 Sniffy lot seeks solution about level of intelligence (6)
- 16 Distributed confetti perhaps about right in all directions (6)
- 17 Saint teaching the whole Church without a word (6)
- 18 Send to sleep as a means to see mythical winter deity (6)
- 21 One after short sleep back to reveal Greek philosopher (4)

Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 7 November, 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 | Tough

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

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

Solution to the 17 October puzzle

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

Solution to the 17 October crossword No. 728

Across: 1 Alcuin; 5 Logos; 8 Missa; 9 Cantata; 10 Shem; 11 Nebraska; 13 Oxlip; 14 Anzac; 19 Albrecht; 21 Ibis; 23 Bubonic; 24 Dürer; 25 Theta; 26 Norcia. Down: 2 Lisieux; 3 Ulam; 4 Nicaea; 5 Lanfranc; 6 Grass; 7 Stabat; 8 Muse; 12 Hibernia; 15 Alberti; 16 Talbot; 17 Chacun; 18 Tsar; 20 Bible; 22 Oder.

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