

## Sisters to the stars

STROLLING along Bridge Street, Skibbereen, in west Cork, it would be easy to miss a plaque on the wall of a beauty salon that marks the birthplace of Ellen Mary Clerke in 1840 and her sister, Agnes Mary Clerke, two years later.

Their father was a liberal Protestant who had married a wealthy Catholic, Catherine Deasy of the famous Clonakilty brewing family. The girls mucked around with their father's telescopes and chemistry experiments and learnt music, Latin and Greek from their mother. At 15, Agnes had started work on a popular history of astronomy that was to astonish the scientific world. She has a crater on the moon named after her. Ellen hoovered up languages, translated Italian poetry, published pamphlets in German, and dabbled in Arabic. She published monographs on astronomy as well as books of verse and a novel, and streams of magazine articles on travel, anthropology, religion, history and literature. After leaving Cork, the sisters lived in Florence before moving to Redcliffe Square, Kensington, to live with their parents. Gregarious and hospitable, they never married. Ellen died in 1906, and Agnes the following year; both are buried in the family vault in nearby Brompton cemetery.



Ellen joined the staff of *The Tablet* in 1886 and wrote a leader each week – often on international affairs – for twenty years up to her death, often deputising for the editor, John G. Snead-Cox, a relative of the paper's owner, Cardinal Herbert Vaughan. Snead-Cox was uncomplicatedly Conservative and unionist; and although she came from the “rebel county”, Ellen was as devout in her unionism as she was in her Catholicism. Ironically, Ellen's time at *The Tablet* coincided with the period when the feeling deepened that the paper was “anti-Irish”.

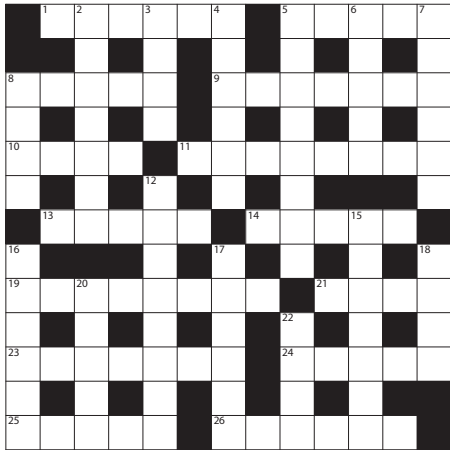
A YEAR AGO this week, we had Mother Teresa on the cover, and an article inside by Gëzim Alpion, who has done more than any other scholar to reveal the influence of his fellow Albanian's family and cultural roots on her extraordinary life. Now Dr Alpion, a sociologist based at the University of Birmingham, has received the Mother Teresa Medallion from the President of Albania, Ilir Meta.

Under the fabulously repressive regime of Enver Hoxha – brutal even by Eastern European standards – religious believers of all confessions were persecuted. Previous winners of the award include Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, president of the Pontifical Council for the Family, who was the first priest to enter Albania after the fall of communism in 1991. When Paglia arrived, he was able to visit the one bishop still alive. He had been in prison for 19 years.

Gëzim sent us a photograph of himself and his wife Dashi on the steps of the presidential palace in Tirana, built by Italian Fascists in the 1930s for King Zog, then appropriated by the communists in 1945. He is showing off his decoration, one of the most prestigious this unsettled and mysterious country bestows: a handsome golden relief of Mother Teresa with her hands joined in prayer.

## PUZZLES

## PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 769 Enigma



## Across

- 1 Compensate for that rotten clique (6)  
5 One inclined to be obsequious in shady surroundings (5)  
8 An increasing number driven round the bend by the code (5)  
9 Music maker to speed up graduations (7)  
10 Scheme for taking the drug off the aircraft (4)  
11 In favour of the rascal wanting to close down Parliament (8)  
13 The greetings we hear bring moments of elation (5)  
14 Join together the first two lessons to cause confusion (5)  
19 Yes, I'll die, though the description indicates that I won't! (8)

## Down

- 21 Drink to a girl (4)  
23 It is bad for you and I (7)  
24 Ruth lost you after the exercises in the city (5)  
25 Only a sap would write about sin (5)  
26 Send me back among the babies to find the sacred emblems (7)  
2 It's a car; one would make a mistake in describing it as beautiful (7)  
3 Get rid of something in the garden (4)  
4 Here's something to wear, thanks to Shakespeare (6)  
5 The champion came on horseback and had a walkover (8)  
6 Having a terrible row is useless and it isn't right (5)

- 7 Had a close resemblance to one when deceased (6)  
8 Bringing up such guides is a nuisance on the computer (4)  
12 See the underground worker struggle with an instrument (8)  
15 Garland sent to be neatly cut in Ireland (7)  
16 One in ten can press a button (6)  
17 Vegetable causes vehicular damage (6)  
18 Baruch lost his heart to one who made notes (4)  
20 Romi left memorials to food (5)  
22 The water providers came up as Ireland's little saint went down in the row (4)

Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 14 August, The Tablet, 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 6GY. Email: [thetablet@thetablet.co.uk](mailto: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 Saints, Monasticism and Philosophy of Religion – from the OUP's Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random. **■ We are processing entries but there may be a delay in notifying winners and sending out prizes. Please keep entering.**

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## SUDOKU | Challenging

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

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

## Solution to the 24 July puzzle

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

## Solution to the 24 July crossword No. 766

**Across:** 7 Alexei; 8 Pascal; 10 Shiatsu; 11 Bonar; 12 Fief; 13 Heine; 17 Cliff; 18 Lawn; 22 Nader; 23 Realism; 24 Rococo; 25 Alison.  
**Down:** 1 Salsify; 2 Perigee; 3 Delta; 4 Jawbone; 5 Scans; 6 Clare; 9 Cuneiform; 14 Clarice; 15 Laziosi; 16 Anemone; 19 Snark; 20 Edict; 21 Sable.