

1ACross – A Good Place to Start

Our Christmas crossword puzzle is the collective work of 25 members of the 1ACross group on Facebook – a troll-free, ad-free haven for those who enjoy setting and solving cryptic clues and puzzles.

Founded two years ago by veteran setter, Sowmya Ramkumar it's an ideal and friendly group to learn and improve one's skills. Sowmya is a financial consultant and has set over one hundred cryptic crosswords themed on brand names for an Indian business publication.

One indication of the global appeal of crosswords, in general and this group, in particular is that the admin team is geographically diverse, with Sowmya from India, living in the Middle East, Lakshmi Vaidyanathan and Ramki Krishnan based in India, Brian Dungate in the UK and Heidi Schroeder and Martin DeMello living in the US. While the majority of the members are from India or the Indian diaspora, many skilled setters from all over the world are members, with the emphasis being on producing good British-style clues. Incidentally, a 1ACross member has produced every crossword puzzle in our magazine for several years.

What could be described as an elitist solitary pursuit, has metamorphosed into an amazing social activity at 1ACross. Every day, new themed games based on cryptic crosswords are played in the group and there is an atmosphere of camaraderie and bonding that goes beyond geographic, political, theistic or other beliefs. There is mutual respect for different styles of setting and a willingness to learn from each other while having fun.

In the process of setting and solving clues, friendships are built and sustained with like-minded people, bound together by their common passion. Many of these people are yet to meet in real life, but all those occasions where some of these online acquaintances have met, have been joyfully documented.

Conversations that began online had seamlessly continued in real life meetings and people have experienced the feeling of catching up with long-lost friends, with whom they seem to have an instant connect and an inexplicable resonance of thoughts.

Every now and then, one comes across the supposed "crossword obituary" - lamenting that this fine intellectual pursuit, is at the brink of extinction.

However, this is true only if you haven't come across online groups such as 1ACross. Hundreds of cryptic clues being set and solved every day across several facebook groups, gives us hope that internet cross-wording is not just alive, it has, in fact come of age.

Here's a sampling of clues from some 1ACrossers.

Will not complete back-to-front board game (4, 4) (By Martin DeMello)

Once-sober geezer becomes an unhappy character all too familiar with spirits (8,7) (By Heidi Schroeder)

Two women taking marriage vow - one without a husband (5) (By Sowmya Ramkumar)

XXX has son wanting more (7) (By SSV Avtaar)

Highlight line, r. click, Google

Well, what are you waiting for? If you are interested in cryptic crosswords and would like to check out internet cross wording, come, stop by at 1ACross - a good place to start.