



TO THE EDITOR...

Letters should be marked clearly 'Letter for publication in *The Psychologist*' and addressed to the editor at the Society office in Leicester. Please send by e-mail if possible: psychologist@bps.org.uk (include a postal address). Letters over 500 words are less likely

to be published. The editor reserves the right to edit, shorten or publish extracts from letters. If major editing is necessary, this will be indicated. Space does not permit the publication of every letter received. Letters to the editor are not normally acknowledged.

The absent facts and factors

IAN Robertson's article ('The absent mind: Attention and error', September 2003) provoked in me a knee-jerk response of the most basic kind. I am a Chartered Psychologist working in the *very* applied field of human factors, where phenomena like attention and error are my bread and butter. In answer to Ian's question concerning rail-based incidents 'What can psychologists contribute to the understanding – and prevention – of such accidents?' I want to shout 'Loads! And they are doing it right now'. And it doesn't need any understanding of neuro-

Cockpit simulation – just one of the ways psychologists try to understand how technology and humans interact

physiology for them to do this either.

Attention, vigilance and safety are the direct concern of psychologists working in

human factors – the application of knowledge concerning many aspects of 'human-ness' to system, technology and service design. From the financial

trading floor, to the aircraft cockpit, to the sea-bed, even to the mobile phone, psychologists are endeavouring to understand the way that technology and humans interact (in terms of attention and the rest of it) and are applying this knowledge to help design safer, more effective systems for people to work and play in. In this field, psychologists look at the real interaction of cognitive systems with the real world of 'things' and beings.

Deeper, more insightful explanations of what's going on would be great – but a greater knowledge of fronto-parietal interaction (a term I plucked

Providing for human factors psychologists

IN these times of statutory regulation there has been much discussion of the role of the professional psychologist and the ways in which the Society represents them. As a young psychologist, however, I find myself asking – where have all the human factors psychologists gone?

I have a good first degree in psychology from York, where I first learned about human factors psychology, and I have just completed the internationally recognised MSc in ergonomics at Loughborough, and am about to progress my studies to the PhD level at Nottingham. At all of these institutions I find psychologists who are members of the Society who work in a human factors/engineering psychology sphere, both professionally and academically. When I finish my PhD I will want to become a Chartered Psychologist, one of the main reasons being the need for such a professional distinction. I know for a fact that many of those in industry, when looking for an ergonomist to employ, specifically ask for people who are either registered ergonomists (full members of the Ergonomics Society) or

Chartered Psychologists. But as a Chartered Psychologist what would the Society offer me? I could become a member of the Division of Teachers and Researchers in Psychology, but this would in no way represent what I would be doing professionally.

There must be hundreds, if not thousands, of psychologists with the graduate basis for registration who after their first degree in psychology go on and work in engineering/human factors psychology. Many must also study on the long-established postgraduate courses in the field, and many will no doubt be attending this year's international conference for engineering psychology and cognitive ergonomics.

There is a clear and distinct profession of human factors psychology, which many members of the Society must feel they work within. I am happy to be a member of the Ergonomics Society (which is soon to become a chartered body), but I don't understand why there is such a lack of provision for human factors psychology within the BPS. I would like to think that

my having the graduate basis for registration was worthwhile and that the Society had more to offer me. As human factors psychologists, why do we not have our own Division? Divisions supposedly represent professional groups, and we have a clear and distinct professional group. For those unfamiliar with the field there may be the presumption that I should or could join the Division of Occupational Psychology, but without a degree in occupational psychology I am not eligible for full membership, nor would I really choose to have full membership, as occupational psychology is simply not the same as human factors psychology. The role of the human factors psychologist is not restricted to an analysis of the world of work; the research we do extends into many other spheres of life. As the American Psychological Association have their section 21, all I ask is – why don't we?

David Kirk
 Pear Tree Farm
 Old Parsonage Lane
 Hoton
 Leicestershire

randomly from the article) is about as useful to a psychologist working on reducing incidents of Signals Passed at Danger as a hole in the head. More theoretical coherence would be great, but it's simply not an entry requirement to doing something useful in the field. What are needed are explanations and models that psychologists struggling with all the complexity of people and technology and culture and procedures can actually use – ones that produce better designs.

Whilst there is no direct reference to blame in Ian's article, I detect a whisper of the notion in the introductory paragraph and elsewhere. It is such an important issue in human factors that I want to draw this out just to be sure that there is no accidental pollination of the idea that it's OK to blame individuals when things go wrong in sociotechnical systems.

In human factors we recognise that there are many factors that can 'force the hand' of an individual's behaviour. Whether poor system design, pathological elements in organisational cultures or flawed technologies – all

delimit the freedom an actor has to act. A system designed such that a train driver *must* perform a task that is inherently boring and that doesn't recognise the intrinsic physiological, psychological or sociological constraints or capabilities of the driver, is a system that is inherently faulty and error prone. The characteristics of an individual's attentional span are a given, but technological systems are not – it behoves me as a psychologist advising on interaction design to take this into account.

So let us hear no more of attentional factors in incidents and accidents – 'human attention' is the fact. The tasks, systems, cultures and technologies that we design are under our control. Let's get this right and accord the human in the system the presumption that most of the time they are focused to the limit of their abilities on the task in hand. In fact, it is often their innovative 'genius', reason and determination that is the glue that allows systems to work *in spite* of their design.

Mark Hicks

*1 Bartholomew Lane
London EC2*

UNDULY DISMISSIVE?

I THOUGHT that Tony Ward's review of Lynn and Vanhanen's *IQ and the Wealth of Nations* was unduly dismissive (Book reviews, September 2003). His observation that there is a substantial negative correlation between IQ and national literacy need not imply that the latter causes the former. Equally, Castro-Caldas's work on brain structure does not serve as a proof that illiteracy lowers IQ. It could well be argued that low-IQ people learn more slowly, acquire literacy to a lesser extent, have fewer cognitive strategies, and thus compound their economic problems.

A more balanced review would have mentioned the difficulty that economists have in explaining why some countries are wealthy and others are poor, and would have noted that Lynn and Vanhanen had achieved significant regression predictions by including IQ estimates. Finally, it would have been fair to point out that they laid stress on improved nutrition in poor countries as a way of improving cognitive development.

James Thompson

*Royal Free and University College Medical School
London W1*

Widening university access

I WISH to take issue with David Nelson (Letters, October 2003), who seems to have missed the point regarding access to university for 50 per cent of school leavers. Surely the intention is not to ignore individual differences but to acknowledge the source or cause.

Performance on examination day must be influenced by many environmental factors, not the least being the school. The effort that many parents put into having their child attend a 'good' school is a recognition of the effect that particular aspect of environment may have. It could be the skills of the teaching staff, but the general attitudes of pupils to every aspect of examination success can be quite powerful. Many so-called good schools are carried forward on a wave of effort and enthusiasm for high-grade results generated in the pupil culture quite independent of teacher contribution. In fact, many teachers in high-achieving schools wouldn't survive a day in some of the more deprived areas.

Whether admitting 50 per

cent of school leavers lowers the academic standard of the universities or not is a different issue. It could lead to a rise in failure rates, but this might have to be accepted in the interests of allowing students from disadvantaged schools the opportunity to obtain decent qualifications. In any case, something can always be done to minimise any adverse effect of higher rates of drop-out. In the end it's all about the politics of education, and it seems to me wrong to set up some sort of psychological support for the status quo.

On a personal note, I attended a newly upgraded secondary school, so in 1940 I had no tuition at all when preparing for the Glasgow University Bursary Competition. I simply based my studies on previous papers, but I was competing with students whose sixth-year scheme of work was designed for the bursary exam. It seemed to me rather ironic that the better-off children won most of the bursaries.

Bob Vallance

*14 Arthurlie Drive
Uplawmoor
East Renfrewshire*

Statutory regulation, unions and the BPS

THE progress report by the Chair of the Working Party on Statutory Regulation (September 2003) highlighted important milestones on the road to professional regulation and raises the following issues.

The report identifies 'several thousand appropriately qualified psychologists who are either not members of the Society, or...not on the Society's Register of Chartered Psychologists'. Members might be interested to know the breakdown of that number into categories reflecting the Society's Divisions.

My curiosity about qualified

non-members arises out of a recent review of educational psychologists in Northern Ireland who do not hold chartered membership. Since there is no public record of non-chartered membership of the Society, I was unable to determine, additionally, how many are not members of the Society. Out of 138 practising educational psychologists in Northern Ireland, virtually all in local government employ, only 12 (9 per cent) are included in the Society's Register of Chartered Psychologists.

An educational psychologist

of considerable experience and seniority in Northern Ireland indicated that there would be 'fierce opposition' if educational psychologists were expected to pay a fee to be registered. Their expectation is that employers 'will have to pay their registration fees', which at present they will not.

If educational psychologists consider that a union such as the Association of Educational Psychologists meets their needs more than the professional inclusiveness and services of the BPS, then the question arises

psychologist. If *psychologist* is not protected, what will stop unqualified and untrained persons using a title not included in protected qualified or adjectival titles? For example, could somebody use the title *paediatric psychologist*, since neither *paediatric* nor *psychologist* would, presumably, be prohibited by the statutory regulation of the title *educational psychologist*?

I have always felt uneasy that the leading adjective in DECP is 'Educational' rather than 'Child', implying that education is what the Division is really about, the child being of secondary importance. If it is decided to press for a qualified title, should it be *child and educational psychologist*, to put the emphasis where it belongs and to reflect the Division's full purpose and title?

David M. Houghton
Ballygan House
Macfin Road
Ballymoney
County Antrim

Geoff Lindsay, BPS Honorary Treasurer, replies: *David Houghton raises some interesting points. The main issue to clarify is that once statutory regulation is under way, all applied psychologists in practice will be required to register if they are to be able to use a protected title. The Society is the body negotiating with the Department of Health and HPC for statutory regulation of all applied psychologists, whereas it is open to a union to seek changes in conditions of service such that the employer pays the registration fee. Unions and the Society have different and complementary purposes and we have had and continue to have fruitful meetings with the Association of Educational Psychologists on these matters. I hope to write more on the issue of protected titles in December's Psychologist, after discussion at the Board of Trustees and Council in October.*

whether they should form a separate professional body. Where would that leave them vis-à-vis the Health Professions Council? For example, would they be required to use a non-protected title? Presumably, they would have to negotiate on their own behalf, individually or as an association, for statutory recognition? The tendency to look to a union rather than the BPS might be reflected in the few advertisements in the Society's *Appointments Memorandum* for educational psychologists. Has the BPS actively decided to accept that educational psychologists may choose between the Society and a union, or has it simply avoided confronting the problem?

A related issue is that of the title the Society seeks to be statutorily protected. There is a strong case for it to be

Jekyll and Hyde psychology

AFTER reading the editor's note on p.513 of October's issue of *The Psychologist*, it occurred to me that *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson published in 1886 might lend itself particularly well to a psychological analysis.

In this story Dr Jekyll

invents a potion designed to separate good from evil and administers it to himself, which brings about the notorious Mr Hyde, a 'monster' completely lacking in morals, who ends up prowling the streets committing hideous crimes. Dr Jekyll however continues to experiment and finds after a while that he turns into Mr

STRAIGHT TO THE POINT...

■ Revd Bob Dorans (Bedlington, Northumberland) on the 'Divine therapy' article by Janet Sayers, in the September issue: I understand many scientists believe in God.

■ Caroline Burgess (St Thomas' Hospital, London) on the 1st Annual Meeting of the American Psychosocial Oncology Society: I note that the meeting will be held at the Hilton in the Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, Florida. Will they be presenting Mickey Mouse research?

WRITE TO THE PSYCHOLOGIST

Our main function is to serve as a forum for discussion and debate, so it is vital we continue to receive your views on the articles and letters we publish, and on any topic relevant to psychologists. There are also special types of contribution we would like to encourage:

Looking back: Were you there when Eysenck did battle with the *British Journal of Medical Psychology*? Do you remember the great Burt controversy? What was Bartlett like as a person? We believe the history of psychology is important, and we want to hear your personal recollections for our letters pages. Send your contributions, of less than 500 words, to psychologist@bps.org.uk, marked 'Looking back'. And don't forget that we welcome longer articles on the personalities and contributions of eminent psychologists, dead or alive. See Dianne Berry's article on Broadbent, available via our searchable archive at www.bps.org.uk/publications/the-psychologist.cfm, for an example.

Question time: If you have a brief and burning question on any aspect of psychology, send it to us marked 'Question time'. See October for an unanswered question.

Counterpoint: If you read an article in *The Psychologist* that you fundamentally disagree with, then the letters page is your first port of call: summarise your argument in under 500 words. But if you feel you have a substantial amount of conflicting evidence to cite and numerous points to make that simply cannot be contained within a letter, you can submit a 'Counterpoint' article of up to 1500 words – but we need to receive it within a month of the publication of the original article.

Hyde without even having taken the potion. He begins to despair when he runs out of potion that will turn him back to Dr Jekyll and realises that his metamorphosis into Mr Hyde will be permanent, so he kills himself.

Although the reader is not aware that they are one and the same person until the last chapter, thinking maybe that they are brothers, the themes of the 'duality of man' of 'good vs. evil' of 'civilisation vs. savagery' run throughout the book. Readers' senses are assaulted when they realise that this 'good' and 'evil' reside in the same body. These ideas may lend themselves to an

analogy with Freud's concepts of the id (the primal instincts and drives) and the superego (the moral voice and conscience), and with the potential for conflict between them within one person.

Not only the character (or characters?) but also the plot in Stevenson's story seem to underlie a whole variety of themes that have fascinated psychology for many years, from morals to personality.

I believe that an in-depth analysis would be quite likely to generate a variety of lively discussions.

Georgina Gray
55 Maesheli
Aberystwyth

Collaboration between industry and university – A note of caution

SO, businesses desire 'an effective mechanism to influence the courses and teaching on offer at universities'? *The Psychologist's* report on the Lambert Review ('Getting down to business', September 2003) leaves unquestioned the Review's assumption that increasing the linkages between industry and universities is a good thing. Shouldn't psychologists, with all our studies of experimenter effects, be at least cautious of the introduction of extra-scientific interests into our work? That industry–university collaborations should be a dilemma for psychologists rather than an assumed goal is highlighted by a letter from Justin Joffe, just two pages later in the same issue of *The Psychologist*. Professor Joffe, of the University of Vermont, states that he prefers to use British sources for teaching his students about mental health, due to the saturation of North American mental health research with biased drug company agendas.

Of course, we cannot afford to shut our work away in an ivory tower. But, rather than

seeking to harmonise our practices with industry interests, perhaps we should see the tensions and divergences in collaborations between psychologists and industry as a good thing – as a sign of our independence.

Flora Cornish
London School of Economics
& Political Science

DEADLINE

Deadline for letters for possible publication in the December issue is **31 October**

PRESCRIBING NOT THE ANSWER

I STRONGLY oppose prescription privileges for psychologists for four main reasons.

1. Most mental disorders are not diseases, but rather are disorders of behaviour learned in socially toxic environments. These behaviours can be unlearned. They could be prevented. It is far more important that clinical psychologists in training learn about classical and instrumental conditioning than about drugs that mask discomfort.

2. The ruling ideas of society are those that support the ruling class, so the dominant model currently explaining mental disorders is 'brain disease'. It is so much cheaper, and the drug companies will pay for publicising and supporting it. Efforts to reduce the real causes – poverty, hopelessness, injustice, terrible schools, the growing income gap between rich and poor – would raise taxes and require more governmental regulations.

3. Groups at highest risk include migrant workers and their families, the elderly poor (mostly women), minorities, and victims in general. How many of these need prescriptions?

4. Finally, public health teaches us that disorders are never treated out of existence. Prevention is the answer but requires a controversial struggle for social justice.

George W. Albee
University of Vermont

A motley collection of psychosomethings

I WATCHED *The Mind of Blair* on Channel 4 in September with amazement and astonishment – and some concern. No doubt the motley collection of psychosomethings laughed along with us about the petty thoughts abstracted from longer interviews, but what about our reputation among the general public?

The mad fringe will probably soon be asking us to take over the world, as psychos have an unambiguous analysis of everyone and everything. The majority, though, will lump us with astrologers, alchemists and other wide-eyed fantasists, and conclude that we are light years away from understanding the complexity of human nature.

If this type of analysis becomes a trend, should not *The Psychologist* at least monitor and comment upon it. A review of the motives of those invited to pontificate would be more interesting, but, more positively, should you not encourage riders about life lines

not being destined to run in a single direction?

Roy Groves
8 Malus Drive
Rowtown
Addlestone
Surrey

Harriet Gross, Chair of the Press Committee, comments: *The Society does try to monitor coverage of psychology in the media through the work of the Press Committee, the press office, and via the 'Media' page (see back of this issue). A media and ethics working group of the Society has also been working to clarify the ethical situation for psychologists (whether professionals or academics) working with the media to ensure that psychology is covered responsibly. The results of these discussions will be made available via the web.*

However we cannot police all coverage, and it is inevitably a fine line between making what we do accessible to the public and falling prey to 'fantasies'.

Recycling in panic attacks

IN his Presidential Address (August 2003) Professor Graham Davey refers to Clark's (1986) 'catastrophic misinterpretation model' of panic disorder. His main points are that the model assumes that severity of symptoms is explained by vicious recycling and that the outcome, a 'panic attack', isn't part of the model.

As a sufferer of panic attacks (hypodermic needles), I have always thought, on the

basis of my personal experience of panics, that the vicious recycling hypothesis is intuitively reasonable. Also I cannot think of an alternative driver of the escalation process. Clark's model is easily augmented to satisfy the criticism that the outcome isn't part of the model. I would do this by inserting between 'apprehension' and 'body sensations' 'hormonal secretions' (adrenaline) and then 'physiological changes'

(e.g. hyperventilation). The vicious recycling events would trigger a series of hormonal secretions each ratcheting up the impact, eventually causing 'physiological changes' to become 'panic attack' (in my case, fainting).

This, of course, would not change the status of the Clark model as a reasonable hypothesis rather than a theory. At present I know of no empirical evidence that supports the assumption of

vicious recycling in panic attacks. Such physiological evidence would be necessary to begin to elevate the Clark model to the status of a theory. I would be interested to do research myself in this area and would welcome any advice, references or comments, especially from an interested and appropriate potential research supervisor.

John Jacob Lyons

London SW1

E-mail: jhnlyon@aol.com

INFORMATION

I HAVE recently completed a psychology BSc and am looking to spend the academic year of 2003/04 gaining valuable **voluntary experience in clinical psychology**, to allow me to apply at a later date to work as an assistant psychologist, hopefully leading to further study in clinical psychology.

I have a wide range of interests from addictive behaviours, depression and OCD to childhood disorders such as autism and ADHD.

Any such experience in the London/Hertfordshire area would be greatly appreciated.

Louise Stephens

26 Chestnut Avenue

Edgware HA8 7RA

Tel: 020 8952 5561;

e-mail: goonerfan100@hotmail.com

I HAVE (almost) all **copies of The Psychologist** and its various predecessors, dating back to 1970. They are available to anyone who wants them, at no cost other than collection/delivery.

Linda Cresswell

9 Silver Lane

Needingworth

St Ives

Cambridgeshire PE27 4SL

E-mail: LC_EPT@dsl.pipex.com

FINALLY acknowledging the march of time and contemplating a downsizing house move, I can offer **some publication runs free to anyone who can make use of them** and can collect them or pick them up at a convenient halfway meeting place.

There is an almost complete

set of *The Psychologist* (October 1988 onwards) in the Society's own hardback binders with each year's abstracts and table of contents, and the APA's *Monitor* (July 2000 onwards). I have BPS journals BJCP (March 1999 to present) and BJHP (February 1999 to present). There is also DCLP/DFP's *Newsletter/Forensic Update* (Oct 1977 onwards) and *Issues in...* (1981 onwards), DCP's *Newsletter/Clinical Psychology (Forum)* (March 1974 onwards), and DECP and DCP (formerly EDPP) joint *Abstracts* (Dec 1966 to Nov 1970).

I also have a number of ancient Penguins/Pelicans, softback and hardback texts, and reports, some possibly now of archival interest and needing a good home. List available on request.

Tony Black

86 Kidmore End Road

Emmer Green

Reading RG4 8SL

Tel/fax: 0118 947 9103;

e-mail: dablack@waitrose.com

PSYCHOLOGISTS working in the East Midlands and Anglia region interested in **participating in a neuropsychology special interest group** are invited to contact me. If there is sufficient interest, an inaugural meeting will be hosted at St Andrew's Hospital in the near future.

Keith Jenkins

National Centre for Brain Injury

Rehabilitation

St Andrew's Hospital

Northampton

E-mail: KJenkins@standrew.co.uk

I AM a third-year undergraduate student looking to gain some forensic or clinical experience, with the intention of studying for a postgraduate course in forensic psychology. I am hoping to hear from any **clinical or forensic psychologists in the Nottingham area** who would be willing to let me shadow them for a while. I would also be interested in hearing from anyone working as a psychologist in local prison services. Any information, advice or offers will be gratefully received.

Sally Gray

6 Chestnut Grove

Westbridgford

Nottingham NG2 7JG

E-mail: EE104630@ntu.ac.uk;

tel: 0774 048 0600

I AM a consultant clinical psychologist and am part of the National Special Interest Group for Psychological Rehabilitation. I would like to hear from any **clinical psychologists who work in crisis and home treatment teams**, and anyone else who feels they could contribute to a briefing paper on the role of clinical psychologists in these teams.

Karen Leadley

The Chantry Suite

Bootham Park Hospital

York YO30 7BY

Tel: 01904 726476;

e-mail: Karen.Leadley@excha.yhs-tr.northy.nhs.uk

I AM currently studying for a postgraduate conversion diploma in psychology. I am seeking **voluntary**

work in counselling setting in East London or Essex.

Milena Charlton

E-mail: milena@charlton.net

THE new East Midlands Health Psychologists' Group, meeting every two months in Leicester, will be a forum for health psychologists and those training in health psychology to meet and discuss research and practice issues.

Forthcoming topics include pain theory, research and working as a health psychologist in pain; CPD and reflexive practice; and searching databases for qualitative research. Please contact either of us for more details.

Elly Strange

E-mail: elly.strange@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

Sue Peacock

E-mail: smp21@leicester.ac.uk

FREE to anyone willing to collect: **Journal of Experimental Psychology** vols. 69-91.

A.E.M. Seaborne

48 Deerings Road

Reigate RH2 0PN

Tel: 01737 221284 (between 10am and 6pm);

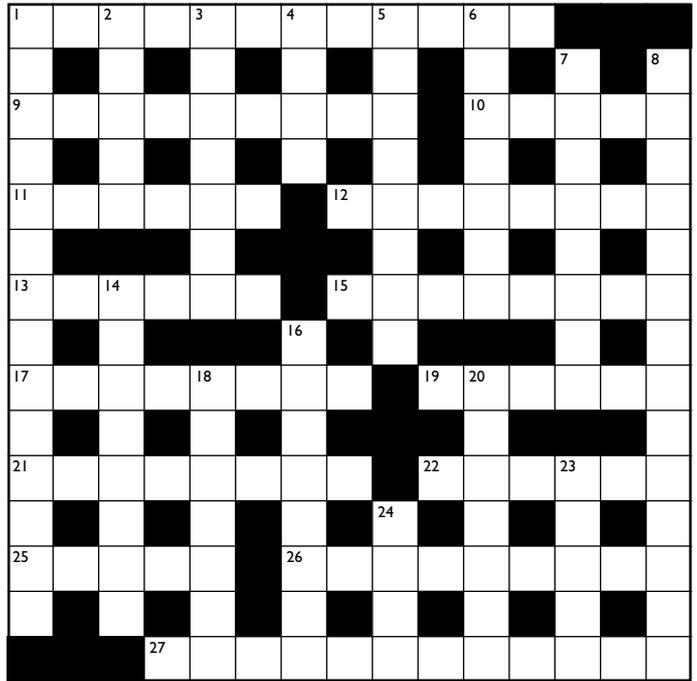
e-mail: mcmc99@dial.pipex.com

AS a teacher with GBR with the BPS, I am seeking **relevant experience prior to undergoing training in educational psychology**. Will consider any psychology-related voluntary work in Somerset/North Devon/North Dorset.

Suzanne Homer

E-mail: sue_homer@hotmail.com

PRIZE CROSSWORD No.12



Across

- 1 Like one buzzing in a hive of activity? (2,4,2,1,3)
- 9 Mafia leader to follow back a greater distance reportedly (9)
- 10 Alternative particle having a charge for stars (5)
- 11 Mentioned land in water having reinforced hole (6)
- 12 In grief, lie about metallic lacework (8)
- 13 Gundog for me, perhaps (6)
- 15 Emphatic macho types to subject to appraisal outside (8)
- 17 Deviant behaviour in a state of dissension (8)
- 19 Some people ski more than one living in the frozen north (6)
- 21 Pleasant neckwear appropriate for refinements (8)
- 22 Fleet provide weapons for girl (6)
- 25 Examines medical pictures (5)
- 26 Digital protection for sketch, sort of (9)
- 27 Principal digs at the centre of operations (12)

Down

- 1 Assertiveness sees grave signs displayed (14)
- 2 Move shoot, for example, coming up (5)
- 3 Sequence encompassing small measure of triangle (7)
- 4 Some teachers show pain (4)
- 5 Plane broadcast nothing sent up with hesitation (8)
- 6 Bearing incentive for arousing feelings (7)
- 7 Large number heading for national statesman (8)
- 8 Drawers providing at least one example of these! (14)
- 14 Spin given cover by traitor (8)
- 16 Gave emphasis in a manner of speaking (8)
- 18 Performer to sit right up having dined outside (7)
- 20 Tool for author reaching readers at first (7)
- 23 Gem discovered at a farm entrance (5)
- 24 Couple twice mentioned skirt (4)

Solution to Prize Crossword No.11

Across: 1 Remember, 5 Elapse, 10 Caterer, 11 Uniform, 12 Spoonerism, 13 Anon, 14 Candid, 17 Excise, 19 Ransom, 20 Latest, 23 Alto, 24 Anointment, 28 Emeriti, 29 Agnosia, 30 Totter, 31 Concrete.

Down: 1 Recess, 2 Metro, 3 Marinades, 4 Error, 6 Lair, 7 Prognosis, 8 Ermine, 9 Nutshell, 15 Apartment, 16 Dementia, 18 Catatonic, 21 Patent, 22 Ethane, 25 Imago, 26 Ensue, 27 Fine.

Winner: Mary Hedges, Yeovil

Send entries (photocopies accepted) to: Prize Crossword, The Psychologist, St Andrews House, 48 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7DR. Deadline for entries is 21 November 2003. A £25 book token goes to the winner, drawn at random from all correct entries.

Name.....

Address.....

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