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April 12, 2008

# When KenKen met Su: a marriage of minds

Puzzles bow to reader power; plus the history of a Times history of the First World War

Sally Baker: Feedback

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— Proof, if proof were needed, that we do listen. A few weeks ago we launched a new puzzle, KenKen, with two daily doses - on page 2 of the main section, and on the back page of times2, for which we had to sacrifice one daily Su Doku.

While some of you wrote to say you were enjoying the KenKens, rather more of you were miffed at the loss of a Su Doku, so from the beginning of this week we have reverted to the status quo ante in times2 with two daily Su Dokus of increasing difficulty through the week, and one Killer. KenKen fans still get their daily fix in the main section.

Inevitably I've now had a couple of complaints about the loss of the KenKen ("Can we please have it back at the rear of T2 in place of one of the ordinary SDs, which are pretty boring now?"), but there is no denying that the majority vote was for the restoration of the Su Dokus. Enjoy.

— Simon Tudor has, rather appropriately, history on his mind: "I have for over 30 years been the owner of a 21-volume Illustrated History of the War published by The Times in 1920, which my father bought for me secondhand.

"This is an exhaustive account of the First World War with numerous maps and photographs and covers every theatre of the war. It is based, as far as I can tell, on numerous contemporaneous accounts written as the war progressed. How was this wonderful publication commissioned, and what sort of value does it have today?"

Over, as ever, to our archive office. As soon as Britain declared war on Germany The Times began planning a publication that would record the unfolding events for posterity. We announced it on August 16, 1914, thus: "The Times is preparing an authoritative History of the Great War now in progress, which will be published in weekly parts at a price of sevenpence per part." (Like everyone else, The Times had no idea that the war would go on for such a long time. In the event the price was increased to eightpence in May 1916 and to ninepence in May 1918.)

We ensured authority for the publication by employing some of the best experts of the day alongside our own senior journalists. The original General Editor of the work was Sir Foster Cunliffe, Fellow of All Souls and former Reader in Military History at Oxford University. However, in December 1914 he felt obliged to contribute more directly to the war effort, and joined the Rifle Brigade, attaining the rank of major. He was killed in action in France on July 19, 1916. Cunliffe's place was filled by J. E. Mackenzie, our Berlin correspondent, although he too died before the work was completed.

The last weekly instalment, No 273, was published on July 27, 1920, and a separate index volume was published a few weeks later. At its conclusion this mammoth work contained well over



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