

The clue: “Greeny initially found resting on ground.” The answer “Frog,” (the initial letters of found resting on ground). This is an acrostic, one of the easier types of cryptic crossword clues. Anagrams, Spoonerisms, abbreviations and double meanings abound in Cryptic Crossword World. Each week, Lesley Carroll and Dianne Baillie lead two Cryptic Crossword Solving classes under the auspices of Bathurst University of the Third Age (U3A). Members of the classes learn to decipher, decode and demystify the various secret languages of cryptic crosswords, in a relaxed and informal environment.

Classes start with some of the less challenging cryptic puzzles such as those found in the Womens Weekly, progressing week by week to some of the booklets devoted to cryptic crosswords, then to the daily newspapers eventually including the Sydney Morning Herald.

The satisfaction of solving a cryptic crossword cannot be exaggerated and once you get going these puzzles become addictive. The elation associated with solving just one particularly difficult clue can be followed, however, by the frustration of the very next seemingly impossible clue. Participants in Lesley and Dianne’s classes have reported that some days they solve the Herald cryptic by lunchtime, while on other days they’re still mulling over clues all day and even into the night. There’s that hallelujah moment though when the puzzle is finally “put to bed.”

The identity of the people who set the puzzles is indicated by their initials. The Friday Herald cryptic is set by DA. DA is that wacky wordsmith, David Astle and his puzzles are particularly challenging. Some cryptic puzzlers reckon the DA really means Don’t Attempt without help from the likes of Lesley and Dianne!

Cryptic Crossword Solving is just one of 40 courses facilitated by Bathurst U3A for people over 50. For more information about Bathurst U3A visit bathurstu3a.com, or contact the Bathurst U3A Secretary, Sue Lasky on 6331 6968.