

A Winter's Tale

Can you find, and underline, **46 words or phrases** connected with '**Christmas**' hidden in the following text? A few are two-word answers, but most are one-word answers, most of which would normally have the word '**Christmas**' adjoining them. The compiler's answers all have **four or more letters***, in the correct order, in the normal direction of reading and not overlapping the ends of lines, but may not have correct capitals. Paragraph totals are in brackets. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the management. (**Others may have occurred unintentionally ... if you find any, good for you!*)

It was too nice a day to sit in self-contemplation, never mind inner conflict. I fancied a hill walk; to stand on key landmarks up Uddingston way and admire the views. This would be better for me than guzzling alcohol lying on the sofa. My legs need regular exercise since bad advice from a chemist let oedema develop last summer. I stood, grabbed my gloves off the piano, elated at the prospect, and from the umbrella stand took my alpenstock (in Granton they're all the rage now). I wouldn't be needing a picnic, a roll and some crisps would do. "Don't need sandwiches now, man!" I muttered to myself. **(10)**

Then the phone rang ... it was my scrounging niece, Heather, in Orkney. "So, how are things there in Deerness?" I asked with gritted teeth, the blood starting to throb in my ears. In the background I could hear Shep, her Doberman, snarling loudly. As I lent nigh thousands of pounds to this lass five years ago, things have since become quite unpleasant. A clause in our contract says 'repayment on demand', but I'd expect her to pay up and would never sue – I'd consider such a drastic act useless in the extreme, as neither side can *really* win eventually. Heather's problem is she can't tell a loan from a gift! She's eccentric, but otherwise mentally sound ... I won't say more lest I slander her. **(11)**

Now, I don't normally suffer very much from anger, but I was gradually becoming, to be frank, incensed that she'd not yet even mentioned the money, but I didn't relish even the slightest argument, so I said nothing. Instead, I merely stabbed my biro several times into the message pad, thinking, "Stop! Resentment is not the way forward here!" That's the trouble with kids today; you've got to let them err youthfully and hope they become mature adults. But I'm out of pocket and, as such, am perfectly entitled to be annoyed. (I've since let my other niece, Fifi, replace Heather in my financial priorities!) I ended the call politely and, on my creaking old legs, set off for my walk. **(9)**

I hadn't gone very far when a car driven erratically on below-par tyres and needing some drastic lubrication of its wheel bearings made me leap sideways. As I staggered on the wobbly paving stones, a crack erupted mud all over my socks, and gravel left a mark etched deeply into the toecap of my left boot. However, you can't let such things mar your walks, and that kind of goo seems to wash out quite easily, so I carried on following the track. **(8)**

When I reached open country the wildlife was fantastic ... a kestrel hovering above its prey, for example, but then my path was crossed by an escaped porcupine! Needless to say I was quite taken aback by seeing this crittur, key feature of which is, of course, its amazing quills. Pausing only to swallow one of my hiccups tablets, I walk on ... but then what's this I see? A wasp routs a hoverfly in a fight over a dead flower! The drizzle got steadily heavier and, as my hair began to tousle, I ghosted eerily homeward, a spectre emerging from the mist, rolling my 'r's and muttering, "Rrain rrreally isn't good for my rrheumatism!" **(8)**