

COMMENT ON “LADIES’ DIARY RIDDLE – AN ANSWER”

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This note is a comment on Ronnie Kon’s article “Ladies’ Diary Riddle—An Answer” in the August *Word Ways*. Normally I would have offered my remarks for Colloquial publication in the next *Word Ways*, but that would not be for three months yet, and I thought it might help to move things along at a little brisker pace if I were to share my key observation right away with a few other conceivably interested parties. Hence this distributed e-mail.

To recap, you’ll recall that Faith Eckler reported in the May *Word Ways* that Jeff Grant had discovered that what I’ll call the “Hurst riddle” had been published first in the *Ladies Diary* almanac of 1782, with its answer to be published in the following year’s almanac. Unfortunately, the 1783 almanac seems not to be available online (although Jeff was able to determine that a copy of it resides in Cambridge University’s library). Subsequently, in his August article, Ronnie Kon reported that he had located another copy in the collection of the British Library, and he additionally presented a photocopy of one page of this volume that he somehow managed to procure from the B.L. This page contains a list of words entitled “Answers to the Enigmas” which surprisingly seems to indicate that the answer to the Hurst riddle is “oven.”

My observation: As some of you may already have realized, the answer list on the photocopied page cannot be the right one for the 1782 enigmas. For one thing, it contains twelve answers, whereas there were only six enigmas presented in the 1782 almanac. Evidently, the *Ladies’ Diary* decided in its 1783 edition to begin publishing the answers to its enigmas in the same issue in which they appeared, and the answer list on the photocopied page is actually the one for the 1783 enigmas, not the one for the 1782 enigmas. It follows that the answer list to the 1782 enigmas (including the answer to the Hurst riddle) is very likely to be found elsewhere in the 1783 almanac.