## 17. Meta-clues

Once you have solved enough crosswords and seen enough clues, you will notice that many answer words – and especially phrases – resemble items of wordplay. *Meta-clues* seek to take advantage of this by providing, along with the usual definition, the result of the wordplay suggested by the answer as the subsidiary indication. These clues are best explained through example:

<div align="center">

Totally a hole puncher? (3,4)

Totally / a hole puncher? (3,4)

</div>

Here we have ALL TOLD (totally, to be taken literally as "in total"), which could be interpreted as homophone wordplay for AWL (a hole puncher). Similarly, in this down clue,

<div align="center">

Plug is a small fortune (4,2)

Plug is / a small fortune (4,2)

</div>

STOP UP (to plug [a hole]) suggests a reversal of STOP to get POTS (a small fortune).

Even container-and-contents meta-clues are possible:

<div align="center">

Consider wonderful? (4,4,7)

Consider / wonderful? (4,4,7)

</div>

In this one, TAKE INTO ACCOUNT (consider) suggests placing R (uncommon abbreviation for "take", from the Latin "recipe", as seen on prescriptions) inside BILL (account) to get BRILL (wonderful; this is a British shortening of "brilliant" in the same vein as "fab" and "gorge").

Meta-clues are not very common and mainly appear in more difficult cryptics, such as The Times.