

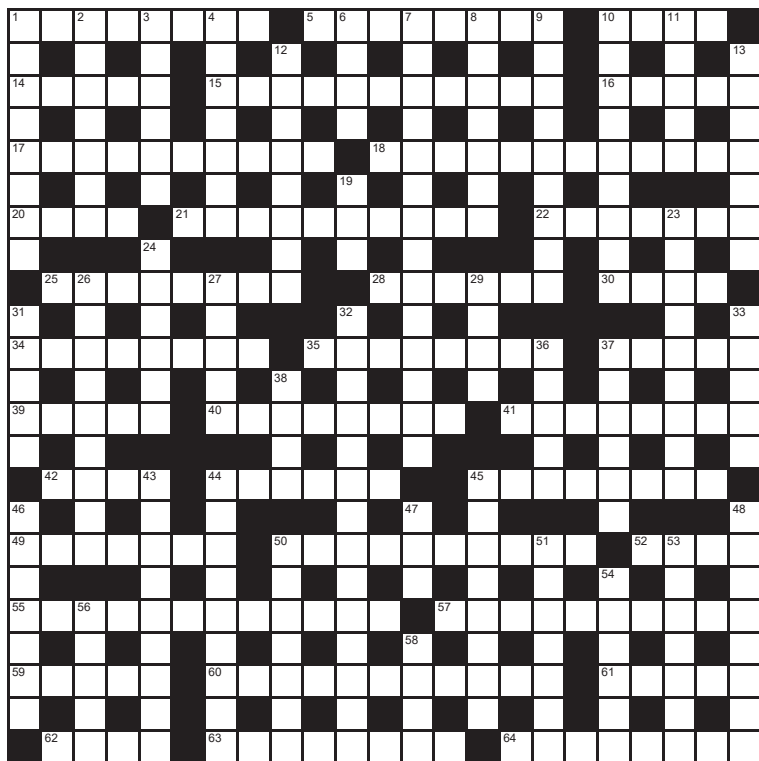
Twenty-seven clues lack thematic definition, 13 on one theme, 14 on another. Most can be verified in Brewer.

ACROSS

- 1 Sick tabby starts to act like kittens – going gaga? (8)
- 5 Scrutinises creepy-crawlies consuming tip of proboscis (8)
- 10 Fraudster’s regular cunning plan (4)
- 14 Cobble together outfit at university (3,2)
- 15 Explorer Park with Jagger’s Hall, we’re told (11)
- 16 Mozart’s first opera (5)
- 17 Gouda’s served with herb filling for short-legged pet (7,3)
- 18 Sign of hesitation upsetting mutt during game (12)
- 20 Large castle with central section removed (4)
- 21 Government plan involving peewit and tailless harpy (5,5)
- 22 It demands a four-in-hand at the hangman’s party (7)
- 25 Mother’s dental problem (8)
- 28 Greeting that’s short on the boundaries of society (6)
- 30 Young lad’s theme (4)
- 34 Covered first of lyrics in period penned by poet (8)
- 35 Sort of farmland surrounding German university? That’s open to question (8)
- 37 The main fact about ecstasy (5)
- 39 Corn from monarch reigning from 1714 (5)
- 40 One red flag waving (8)
- 41 Weapon, badly lit, during fight (8)
- 42 From Ireland, a shillelagh (4)
- 44 Very small amount of time? (6)
- 45 Burning, doing menial work (8)
- 49 Housework remains on the nettle tree (4,3)
- 50 Discrimination quarrel (10)
- 52 Extra duck consumed (4)
- 55 Wrinkle problem spoken of (12)
- 57 Society ruler embracing almost sublime sport (4,6)
- 59 John seen from Lostwithiel to Newquay (5)
- 60 Scientific investigation that is involved with shore-crab (3-8)
- 61 Making Laura itch regularly (5)
- 62 Just enough salmon sandwiches for starters (4)
- 63 Guiding light around almost all Dorset (8)
- 64 Coaxing a little woman in embrace (8)

DOWN

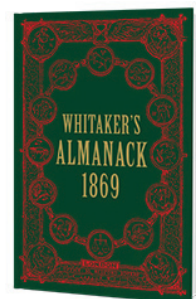
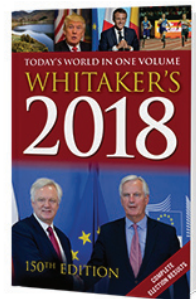
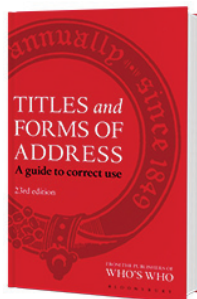
- 1 Rabbie leaving, uses up his energy (5,3)
- 2 Lots of fluid inside (7)
- 3 Copper enters exactly (3,3)
- 4 Young animal on the new walk (7)
- 6 Time is up too! (4)
- 7 Taking it upon oneself – like before a fine meal, it seems (14)
- 8 Artistic director or metal assessor, reportedly (7)
- 9 Wimbledon favourite’s purse forms capital to set up a project (4,5)
- 10 Strange but heartless colloquial themeword (9)
- 11 Popstar’s trap to catch criminals (5)
- 12 Not fit to run – why bother? (8)
- 13 Hardly protection from the rain (7)
- 19, 47 Saved torn drapes (6)
- 23 For king with glove on (3,6)
- 24 Radio operator getting hired (6)
- 26 Oceanarium, not posh, serving coffee (9)
- 27 Hearing me celebrate the decoration (5)
- 29 Beside beside (4)
- 31 Wandering goatherd lost rat (5)
- 32 Marine first leaving during brawls (2,12)
- 33 Drinks upset brings bad mood (5)
- 36 Special edition appearing in crowd scene (5)
- 37 Some imminent relegation is upsetting (6)
- 38 Subsidiary office lacking central heating (4)
- 43 “Wrinkles and furrowed brow” – news summary (9)
- 44 L’Abime – the new version (9)
- 45 Suggesting both game or PM’s residence (8)
- 46 Top cyclist on motorbike (7)
- 47 See 19
- 48 Nocturnal activist’s boundary take over (8)
- 50 Cleaner turned up on top of deck (7)
- 51 Spooner’s lean prophet and girl (7)
- 53 Paperwork from French friend after social security cheque upset (7)
- 54 The scores are level, during game (6)
- 56 Graduate’s discourse cut in half (5)
- 58 Some crude variation in Roman Chester (4)



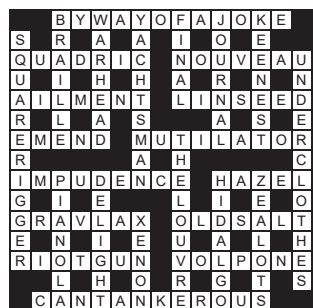
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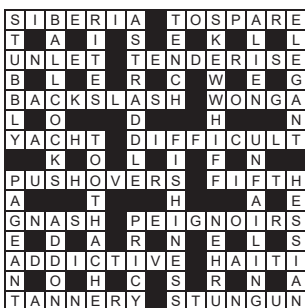
A selection of A&C Black reference books will be awarded to the senders of the first three correct entries opened on Wednesday January 3. Entries, using the form above and marked Christmas Crossword on the envelope, should be sent to Weekend FT, One Southwark Bridge, London SE1 9HL. Solution and winners' names on Saturday January 6.



Solution 15,739



Solution 15,728



Jotter pad