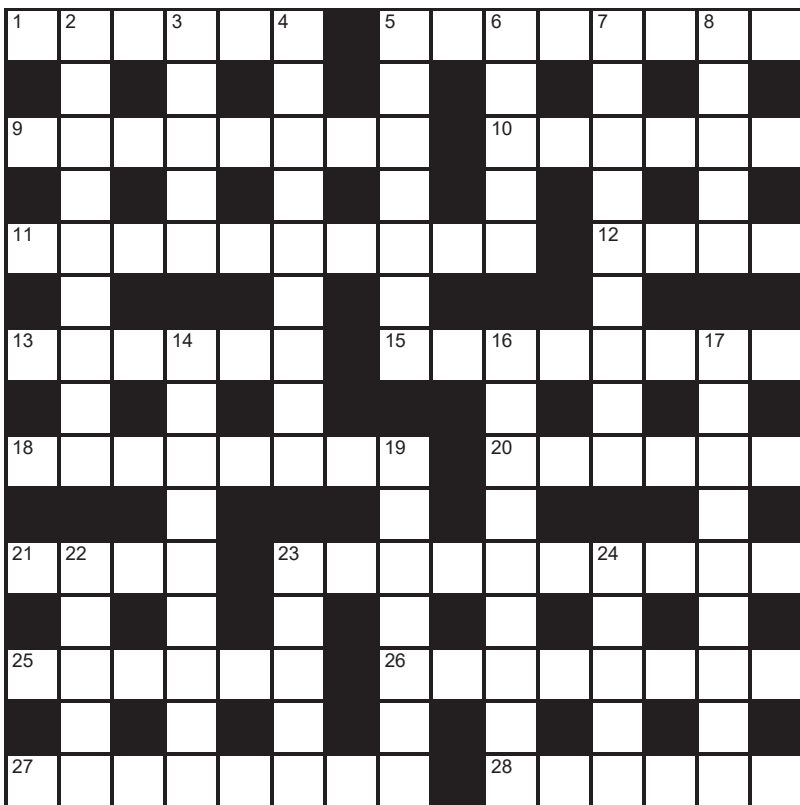


CROSSWORD No 17,981 by GAFF



Solution 17,980



Scan the QR code to access FT crosswords over the last 30 days — cryptic, Polymath, Weekend and Sunday puzzles — or go to ft.com/crosswordapp

JOTTER PAD

A puzzle to mark a birthday tomorrow

ACROSS

- 1 Free to think again (6)
- 5 Endless gross confusion about someone's scientific systems (8)
- 9 Cut charge during month (8)
- 10 Destroy a sign in anger (6)
- 11 Dancer's driver guided by red light (5,5)
- 12 Rather irritating woman (4)
- 13 Start diet with essential meal (6)
- 15 Current pet (8)
- 18 Prayer to throw gun aside (5,3)
- 20 Birds can, maybe (6)
- 21 Singers and seamen back to back (4)
- 23 Scheduled performance of lead dancer (10)
- 25 Box containing a pot (6)
- 26 Muck about too much, but initially acceptable in Bible (4,4)
- 27 Rule out strange water-soluble gift (8)
- 28 Better sermons entail less rambling (6)

DOWN

- 2 Training teenage regular to straddle bike (9)
- 3 Top French star turned writer (5)
- 4 Soldier needs treatment area with bloody cut (9)
- 5 Complete protection (7)
- 6 Misses soldiers holding hands (5)
- 7 Hook turf with lever and non-stop wiggling (9)
- 8 Dark Lord beheaded (5)
- 14 Computer trainer's failure to learn tune (6,3)
- 16 Save keeping a dialect by leaving (6,3)
- 17 Show too much new, content with control (9)
- 19 Not allowed to report below-par score (7)
- 22 Confront party following business leader (5)
- 23 Food containing a seabird (5)
- 24 Gold artefacts maybe bedecked Egyptian rulers' heads (5)