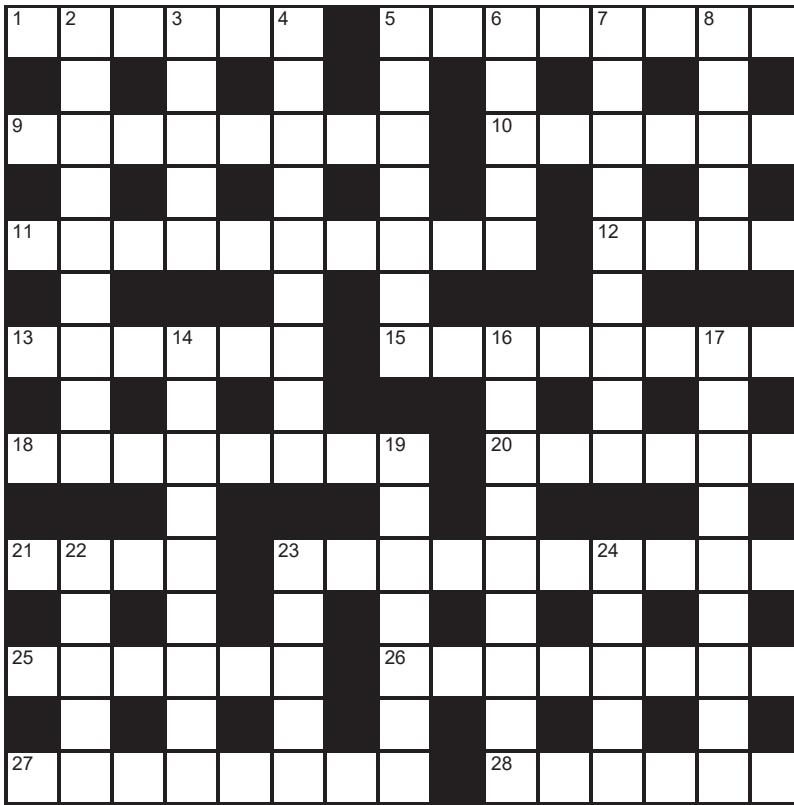


CROSSWORD No 17,981 by GAFF



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

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

DOWN

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