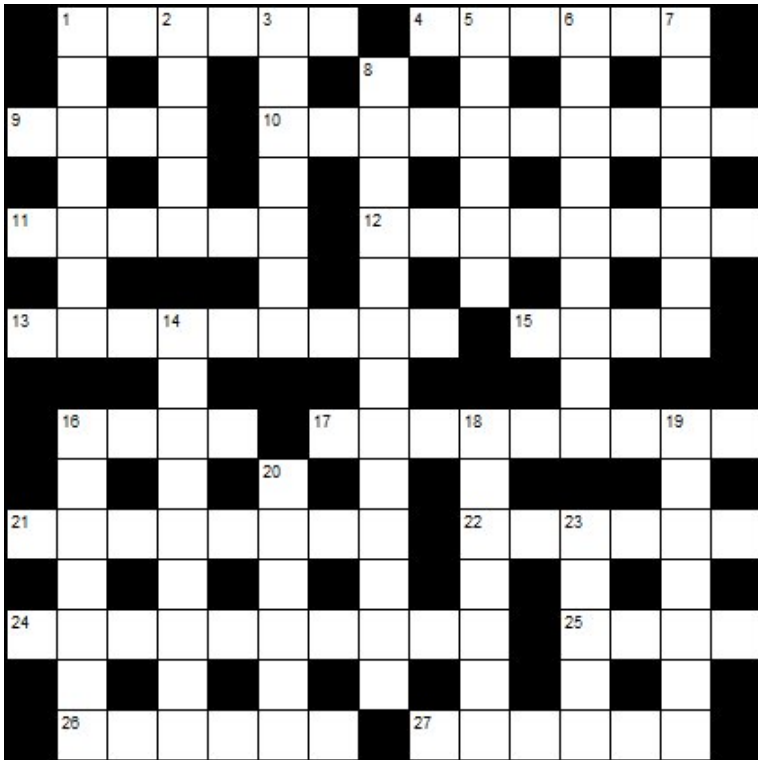


Puzzle by Foxglove

Foxglove first published a puzzle here (as abcFoxglove) in 2011. This new puzzle is excellent in all respects: sound clueing, believable surfaces and above all, it offers an entertaining challenge to the solver. I particularly like 25 across and 3 down.



ACROSS

- 1 Chat at length in pub, returning with snack after early closing (6)
- 4 Invariably sexual way strippers cover up (6)
- 9 Nothing is found on youth centre's operating system (4)
- 10 Lack of interest about unusual node condition (10)
- 11 Mixed reviews after I was dropped resulting in a change of direction (6)
- 12 Picked up ladies and gents here in France (8)
- 13 Sense infighting starts with folk on the inside (9)
- 15 Regrettably unsalable part needs to be returned (4)
- 16 Criticises South moving into the lead in bridge (4)
- 17 Hurry appearance with a musical instrument (4,5)
- 21 Embarrassed like you, say? (8)
- 22 Stick a notice in this place (6)
- 24 Don't start affair without initially elaborating grounds for commitment (10)
- 25 Probable consequence of extremely dire budget (4)
- 26 Bitumen over light brown furniture material (6)
- 27 Questionable to embrace unknown followers at the outset? No way! (2,4)

DOWN

- 1 Mending a Frenchman's fence that's not been finished (7)
- 2 Sex chromosome implanted in South African breed (5)
- 3 The most absurd place for a table, perhaps (7)
- 5 Improve cut agreed by you informally for investment (4,2)
- 6 Leader desecrated a holy atlas, rubbing out Sweden (9)
- 7 Disagreements in school (one over texting protocols) (7)
- 8 Very little like N or P? (4,2,7)
- 14 What SM aficionados enjoy in a room underground (9)
- 16 Academic referring to the Sun introduces beginners to contemporary history (7)
- 18 Jack goes on-line to make mischief (7)
- 19 Artist going up river for something to eat (7)
- 20 Note article's low points (6)

