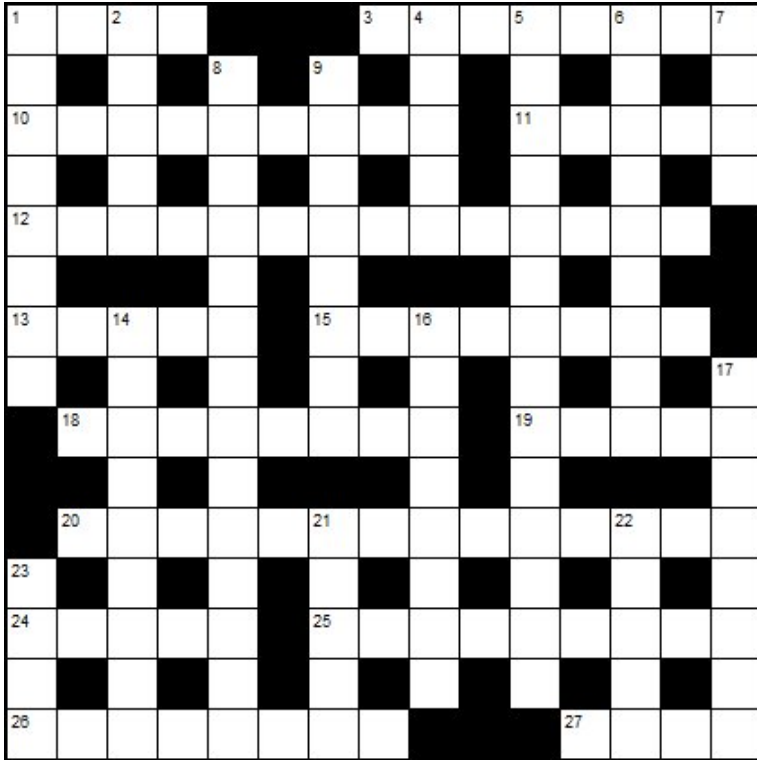


Puzzle by Hoodwink

Hoodwink's debut is an auspicious one. This puzzle shows the flair and originality which marks a good setter. I was amused by 15 across, and 8 down is a belter in the true spirit of cryptic clues!



ACROSS

- 1 Company policy limits carbon perhaps (4)
- 3 Schooled English failure about Ms Blanchett (8)
- 10 Olde pub in a most dilapidated state (9)
- 11 Province of authentic Frenchman (5)
- 12 A French plant around rough sea loch generates ill-feeling (14)
- 13 Run away together from rioting leaderless people (5)
- 15 Top traveller returns after hasty evacuation. Sounds like a tight'n! (8)
- 18 Tips back, woefully stripping two layers. Vicious! (8)
- 19 Group caught in spa city (5)
- 20 Combining weapon and fear, bloc maintains this (7,2,5)
- 24 Qatari, losing trusted allies initially, makes a comeback with one middle easterner (5)
- 25 Butterfly most awkwardly set in salty water (9)
- 26 Colin's initial aptitude is removing dirt (8)
- 27 Playwright Brendan has central character missing pulse (4)

DOWN

- 1 Surprisingly CEO Trump could be PC (8)
- 2 Model tackily attached to wall? (3-2)
- 4 Exhaust noise swamps first half of race (5)
- 5 Shed tears about or on a diverted route to get operation (8,6)
- 6 Convey rapture (9)
- 7 Reduced in rank, Edward leaves as protest (4)
- 8 Paneful expulsion? (14)
- 9 Culinary assistant focuses with last of dough in mixer (4-4)
- 14 Pa's gone and mother's oddly missing. Daughter and son departed, sadly, for this institution (9)
- 16 Shakily climb up on it, missing bit of lungs (8)
- 17 Prime using mixed tint here (8)
- 21 Taxi home – a modest residence (5)
- 22 Communicated audibly by heart (5)
- 23 Radford is currently holding record (4)