

### Christmas

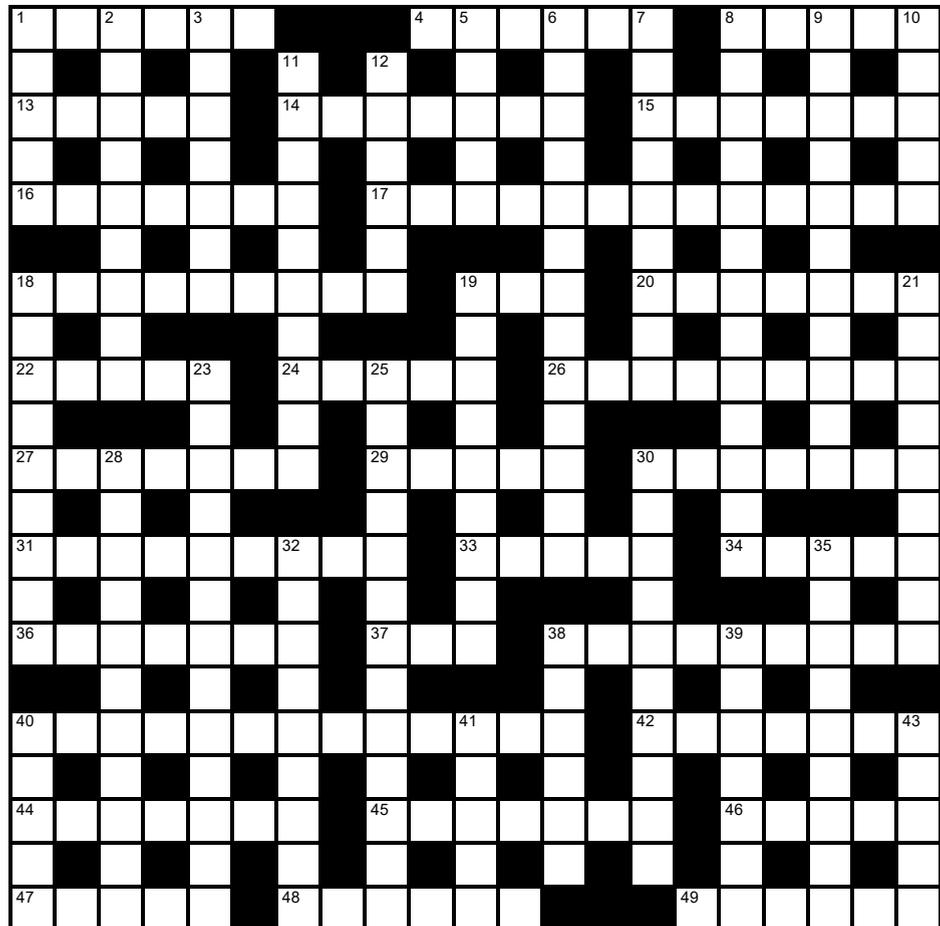
The Down clues are 'normal' and solvers may wish to start with them in order to obtain checking letters which will help when you look at the Across clues. All the Across clues have definitions that lead to a solution that is one letter too long. This letter should be omitted before the solution is entered into the grid - the entries will be real words, some more well-known than others, and the wordplay matches the solution to be entered. To help you get started, the definition is in bold in the first five Across clues.

In clue order the omitted letters form a festive message which is fairly obvious once you know that the enumeration is 5,9,4,3,3,7 and writing these letters alongside each clue will definitely help you solve some of the trickier clues.

In order to assist solvers, the 'dictionary' words in the Down solutions have the definition emboldened in the clue. In addition, three further Across clues have their definitions in bold where either the definition or wordplay (but not both) leads to an unfamiliar word.

**Across**

- 1 Fusses over**  
nothing - that woman's on time (7)
- 4 On either side of**  
Xmas, half-cut?  
Starts off the rum in December (7)
- 8 Jogger**, perhaps  
streaking across  
entrance to Grotto (6)
- 13 Tell tales**,  
including origin of  
terrifying **yarn** (6)
- 14 Celebrating**  
couple, when  
one's left out, can  
start to grate (8)
- 15 Neil Armstrong**  
perhaps cross  
about English  
mother (8)
- 16 One trains charges**  
to be prepared for  
**brief shower in**  
**Scotland** (8)



- 17 Conservative**  
person with  
stoned foreign  
journalists (14)
- 18 Drool container**

one placed in  
reception room  
(10)

- 19 Old man's right to**  
argue (4)

- 20 Resale I organised with the least delay (8)
- 22 Setter and solver in the middle of elegant contemplation (6)
- 24 Passages excerpted from Doris Lessing (6)
- 26 Tethered wild reindeer at back of the shed (10)
- 27 **What actually happens** with Spanish team's position (4,4)
- 29 Ought to cycle for depression (6)
- 30 Live grenade at last found, in the end, pinned (8)
- 31 Snare fractured Suzie's wrist bones (10)
- 33 Request from Bramley for one after knocking back last two (6)
- 34 Woman goes outside, returning very old spade (6)
- 36 **Roughly fashioned** blackleg's couch (8)
- 37 I can afford quality (4)
- 38 Spikes in pets exposing gassiness (10)
- 40 What will be sung by socialist doctor at John Smith's burial place before long (14)
- 42 Calmly submissive concerning regular wiggling by newspaper boss (8)
- 44 Having a blow-out as a result of swindle by sporting body? (8)
- 45 This writer's just ageless (8)
- 46 Sanctions for certain Hungarian wines (6)
- 47 American's time in Royal Society starts again (6)
- 48 Struggle to shield cardinal almost converting (7)
- 49 Bloated users of Big Dave's Crossword blog, extremely lyrical by the close of festive day (7)
- Down**
- 1 Ring when it's time to leave watering hole (5)
- 2 Henry cries about vote for common people (3,6)
- 3 A target shot in sporting event (7)
- 5 Ball hit high in the air is the one going downhill (5)
- 6 Junior doctor's up to date with record keeping duties (13)
- 7 **Wanting husband** to notice taste of turkey (9)
- 8 Primitive people from Eastern land haphazardly capturing queen (13)
- 9 It can be brought to mind a line is one-\_\_\_\_\_ (11)
- 10 Birds of prey found in Inverness-shire (5)
- 11 Thus I'd bathe, ultimately taking wave that's deadly to little swimmers (10)
- 12 Heading to Boy Scout location in Wales (6)
- 18 **Interferes with antique:** puts up prices (9)
- 19 Propose to include East German university in picture (9)
- 21 **Fertilise** dried out heads of every sunflower on board (9)
- 23 Surprisingly Rand seedling bore soft, edible, South African fruits (13)
- 25 Soloist, ignoring leader, nips out, casually adopting relaxed attitude (5,8)
- 28 Pat abstains after conversion in church group (11)
- 30 Wasting time desperately, I'd try all 10 (10)
- 32 Popular beer on tap's **a current attraction** (9)
- 35 Everybody left in pursuit of an exposed "wizard" (3,3,3)
- 38 **Great celestial circle's** firm attraction (6)
- 39 **Saint from Seville** that is embracing ditzy Doris (7)
- 40 Gather at home by Christmas tree, say (5)
- 41 **God's name** united people (5)
- 43 Treated the same, finishes off Christmas puzzle - end of crossword! (5)