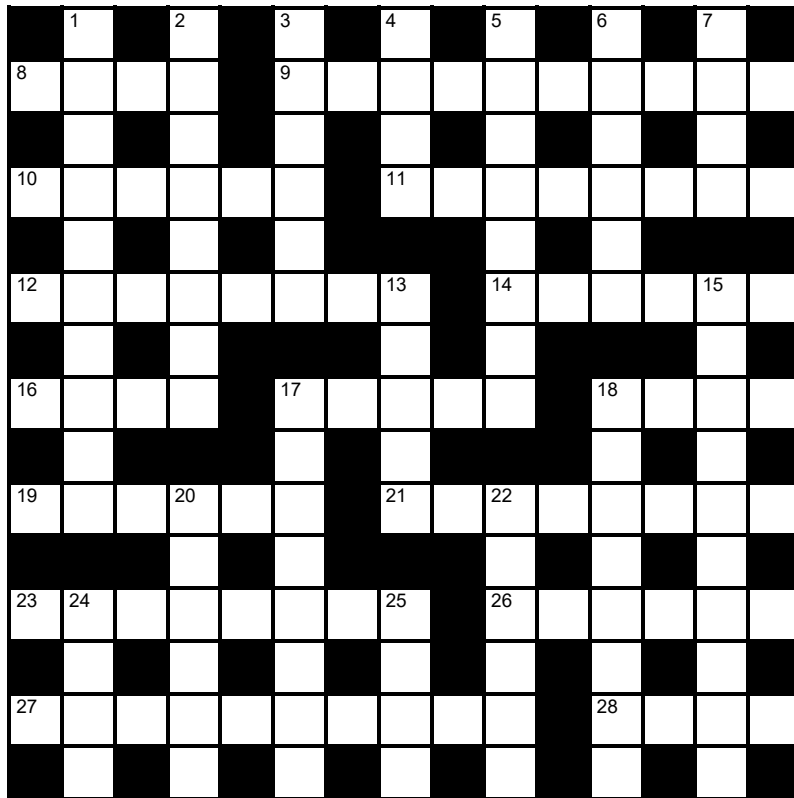


*There is a ghost theme that appears in 16 solutions.  
18ac is not (as clued here) in Chambers.*



**Across**

- 8 Volunteers consuming a French prickly pear (4)
- 9 Capital city cross after grotesque caper; disappointing follow-up (10)
- 10 Reptile wandering in Switzerland when newts wrongly removed (6)
- 11 Strong fabric; a new outfit finally for police officer (8)
- 12 Problem bar rashly includes this over generous provision of good things (8)
- 14 Eventually small and cosy (2,4)
- 16 Some private tuition for housewife (4)

- 17 Coronet changing hands for a comic entertainer (5)
- 18 Good advanced essentially modern Nigerian language (4)
- 19 Extremes of gear including thick cord for one feeling his way (6)
- 21 Small island well lit? No, it's the principal stage illumination (3,5)
- 23 Handheld firework could be a gem (8)
- 26 Vagrants' tense rages (6)
- 27 Bird's a young unmarried woman (10)
- 28 Cup of tea for the Cockney lady who cleans (4)

**Down**

- 1 Cunningly mediate our instrument used to measure hearing sensitivity (10)
- 2 Spy a tangled hair on carpet (4,4)
- 3 Powerful abrasive tool partly smooths and eradicates (6)
- 4 Greek characters to fully satisfy in retrospect (4)
- 5 Twisted conspirator lacking subtle art; venomous creature (8)
- 6 Mum is backing period of fasting (6)
- 7 Crude nationalist producing further crop (4)
- 13 In Lanark sneak about small secluded retreat (5)
- 15 Sailor's masculine

identity; southern switched-on fellow (10)

- 17 Unconcerned, having no vehicle, we hear, going round Europe. (8)
- 18 Showing the way in grand university intake's first hop (8)
- 20 Mindlessly repeat Press Association republican rubbish (6)
- 22 Incessant talk in Holyrood of unstable treaty (6)
- 24 Zest when turning up to plaster with cow dung (4)
- 25 Piece of sacrilege to irritate someone (4)