

**Sudoku** Mild No 15,243

								8
			1	9	4	5		
		3					4	
1			4	2			6	
	5				8		3	
8		2			6		7	
			3			9		
5				4				
	7		8		5			

**Difficult No 15,244** **Fiendish No 15,245**

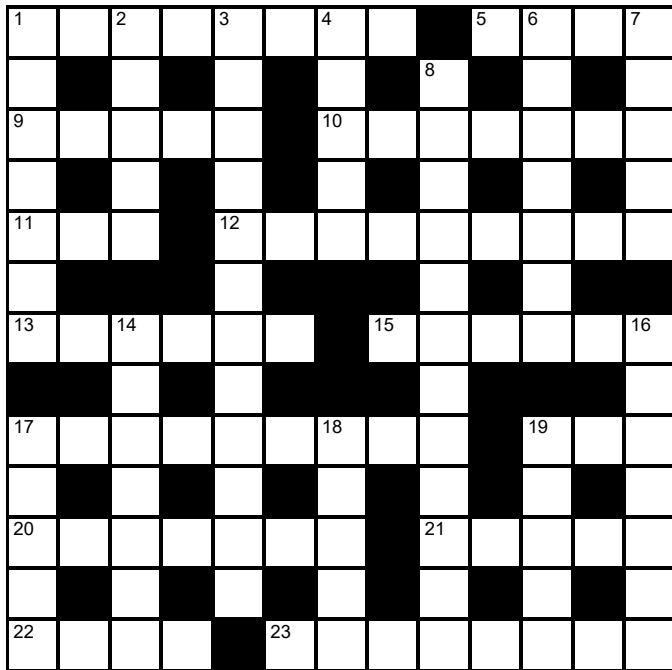
					2	6		
			8	3				
						1	4	8
	7							5
	5				7		6	9
9				5	4	2		7
4		7			9	5		
		9		2				
		3	6	7	8			

					2	3		
9	6	8					2	5
	2		1	9				6
8		6		7		1	3	
	7		3	8				9
2	1	5					8	7
					8	4		

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The Times Quick Cryptic No 2786 by Mara



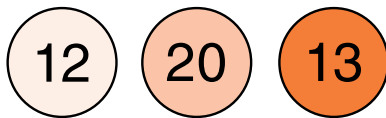
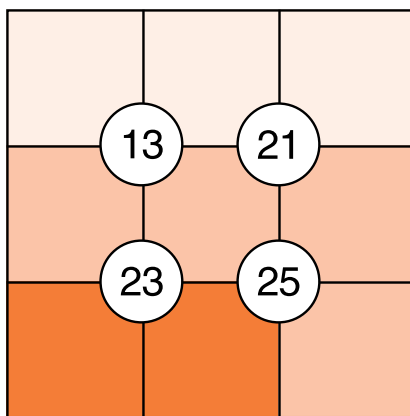
Across

- 1 A fen, mist having moved, clear (8)
- 5 Switch hands, passing to the left (4)
- 9 Not entirely good, and yet excellent! (5)
- 10 Again change a physical exercise after study (7)
- 11 Very cold part of anticyclone (3)
- 12 Garment I've just bought in US state (3,6)
- 13 Settle a match (6)
- 15 Journalist taking part in foxtrot I decided to knock over (6)
- 17 Whiskey trier and a few when drunk (9)
- 19 Vehicle kaput, rear end knocked off (3)
- 20 Men and girl out for troll? (7)
- 21 Correct tax code extremely unusual (5)
- 22 Suddenly see part of a tree! (4)
- 23 Scottish dish tasted by convict? (8)

Down

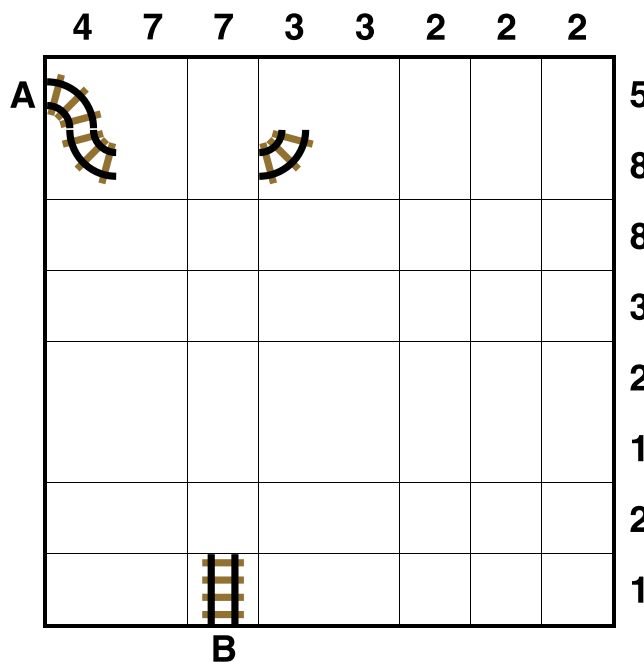
- 1 Island created fresh air (7)
- 2 Older relative — of a kid? (5)
- 3 Witness insect awaiting swatter? (3,2,3,4)
- 4 Tube where growths come up (5)
- 6 Thingummyjig has twit discombobulated (7)
- 7 Ridiculous place to sit when training? (5)
- 8 Arcade nearly collapsing — its days may be numbered (8,4)
- 14 Middle Eastern serial I translated (7)
- 16 Badge pinned by maestro, setter (7)
- 17 Scrap of confetti flying high, iridescent ultimately (5)
- 18 Dance in bronze and green light? (5)
- 19 Directors evidently yawning out loud? (5)

Suko No 4226



Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

Train Tracks No 2352



Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of track go in each row and column. There are only straight sections and curved sections. The track cannot cross itself.

Word watch

David Parfitt

Plateasm

- a An expanse of flat featureless land
- b A philosophical saying
- c Talking with the mouth open too wide

Logodaedalus

- a A mathematical function
- b One skilled in the manipulative use of words
- c A lockable drinks cabinet

Syssitia

- a Meals eaten together in public
- b A complex arrangement of parts
- c A chorus of whispers

**Backgammon** Chris Bray

**Skill differential**

Hitherto in this column we have largely assumed that the two players are of equal strength and will make correct decisions. In practice that will not be the case. How does one allow for the skill differential? Many years ago, Walter Trice and Jake Jacobs wrote a book entitled *Can a Fish Taste Twice as Good?* which tried to cover the topic, but they ended up with pages of statistics and an unreadable tome. For the next two weeks I will provide some practical advice.

To start with, we will travel back to the Monte Carlo world championships some 20 years ago. In this week's position I was Black and White was the late Ed O'Loughlin, who at the time was in the top ten players in the world. In a match to 15, the score was 4-4. Ed owned the cube on four and was on roll.

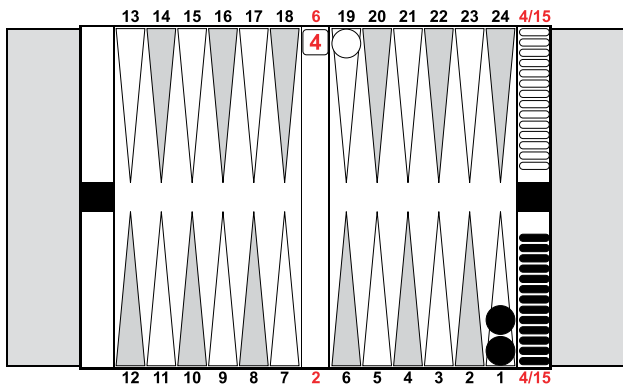
This is a well-known position which you will find in most books on the basics of doubling theory. It is one of only a few known positions where White has exactly 75 per cent winning chances. Twenty-

seven rolls bear off his final checker; nine do not.

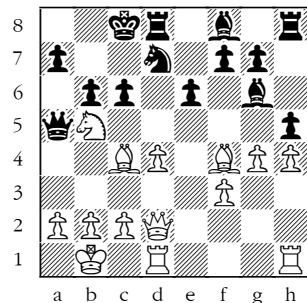
Clearly White should redouble to 8. What should Black do? If the opponents were evenly matched then I could take or pass, and I would be making the correct decision. Here, however, I was the markedly inferior player. As such I wanted as much help from Lady Luck as I could get, so I should take the cube.

Ed shook his dice for a long time but to no avail. Out popped 32 and suddenly I was 12-4 ahead. What happened next is also very instructive. Ed, normally a very calm player, was clearly rattled by his bad luck and played very poorly in the remaining three games of the match, making some very uncharacteristic errors before losing 4-15.

Had I been the better player, I would have dropped the redouble to be 4-8 behind, knowing I had enough time to use my superior skill to turn the match around. The key point is to adjust your cube actions to take account of the skill differential. More on this theme next week.



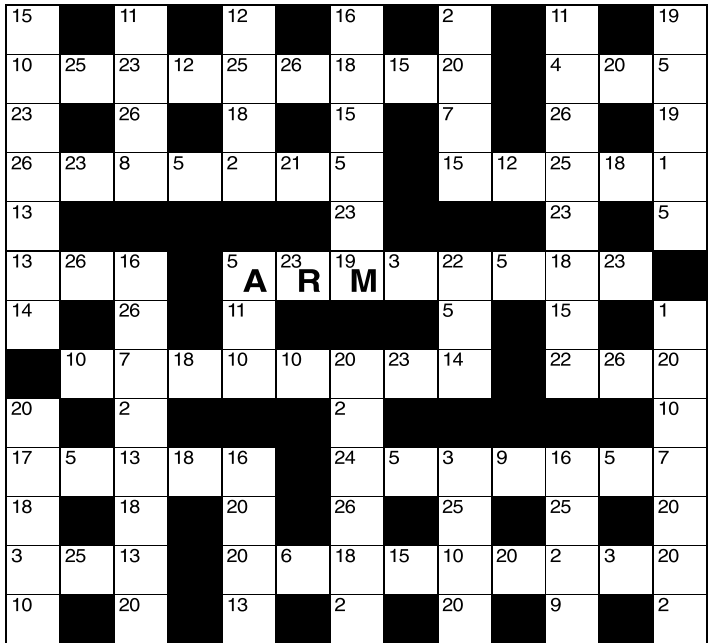
**Winning Move**



**White to play.** This position is a variation from Graif-Asensio, Titled Tuesday, chess.com 2024.

A great deal of skill in chess is based on pattern recognition as similar themes tend to repeat themselves. Here, an experienced player notices the possibility of a two-bishop pincer mate were White able to play Ba6. This gives a clue as to how White can finish off with an ingenious combination. Can you see it?

**Codeword** No 5325



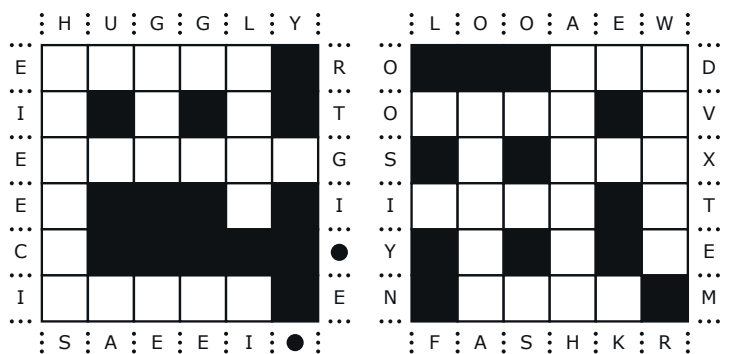
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

Every letter in this crossword-style grid is represented by a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded. *Yesterday's solution, right*

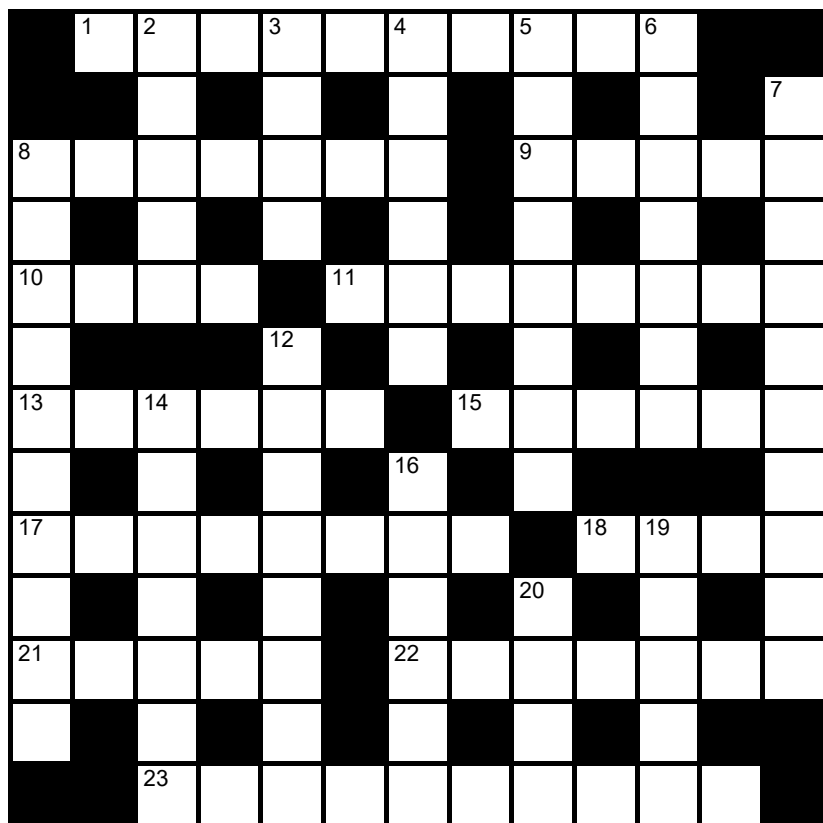
**Cluelines** Stuck on Codeword? To receive 4 random clues call 0901 293 6262 or text TIMECODE to 64343. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. Texts cost £1 plus your standard network charge. For the full solution call 0905 757 0142. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm).

**Lexica** Easy No 7667 Hard No 7668



Slide the letters either horizontally or vertically back into the grid to produce a completed crossword. Letters are allowed to slide over other letters

**times2 Crossword No 9641**



**Across**

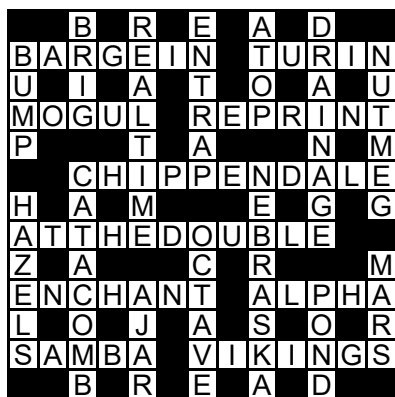
- 1 Vehicle suitable for driving off-road (4-2-4)
- 8 Gleam unsteadily, flicker (7)
- 9 Praise, laud (5)
- 10 Profound (4)
- 11 Britain's largest airport (8)
- 13 Squabble (6)
- 15 Start of the typical working week (6)

- 17 Outline of a course of study (8)
- 18 Ellipse (4)
- 21 Amusing, comical (5)
- 22 Loosen (a jar lid, eg) (7)
- 23 Gradually (4,2,4)

**Down**

- 2 Sheep-like (5)
- 3 Act of boisterous fun (4)
- 4 Very full-pitched delivery in cricket (6)
- 5 Passed during a race (8)
- 6 Stopped work for good (7)
- 7 (Of an account) related in great detail (4-2-4)
- 8 Arranged adjacently (4,2,4)
- 12 Former president of France (2,6)
- 14 Heartless, uncaring (7)
- 16 Satellite town (6)
- 19 Stanza (5)
- 20 Egyptian goddess (4)

**Solution to Crossword 9640**



**Need help with today's puzzle?** Call 0905 757 0143 to check the answers. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

**KenKen** Difficult No 6317

6×		1-	4-	4-	
5	5-			9+	
2÷		1-	2-		
	1-		2-		1-
3-		12+		1-	
	3-				6

All the digits 1 to 6 must appear in every row and column. In each thick-line "block", the target number in the top left-hand corner is calculated from the digits in all the cells in the block, using the operation indicated by the symbol.

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**Futoshiki** No 4865

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<	<input type="text"/>	<	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<	2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
		∨		
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	4	<
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.

**Kakuro** No 3824

	4	15	28			16	6	7	20
20				15		13			
23					27				
		23				7	13		
	12			14			17		
3				18				19	4
11			5			24			
19			17			23		6	
				14				18	
	7	24				8			
		17				14			
12			27					16	10
		16	12						
23					30				
						11			

Fill the grid using the numbers 1 to 9 only. The numbers in each horizontal or vertical run of white squares add up to the total in the triangle to its left or above it. The same number may occur more than once in a row or column, but not within the same run of white squares.

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**Quintagram®**

Solve all five cryptic clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Large facility let out for money (5)

— — — — —

2 Fish are primarily stored in big containers (5)

— — — — —

3 Place to land plane (totally empty) (5)

— — — — —

4 Act of disloyalty requiring time and incentive (7)

— — — — —

5 Various margarines put in the wrong order (10)

A	A	A	A	A	E	E	E
E	E	G	I	J	L	M	N
N	N	O	R	R	R	S	S
S	S	T	T	T	T	U	Y

**Brain Trainer**

<b>EASY</b>	<b>22</b>	x 3	+ 6	÷ 12	SQUARE IT	x 2	+ 18	60% OF IT	+ 8	÷ 2	<b>ANSWER</b>	
<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>57</b>	x 3	+ 55	x 2	- 86	<sup>5</sup> / <sub>6</sub> OF IT	- 79	+ <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> OF IT	+ 79	50% OF IT	<b>ANSWER</b>	
<b>HARDER</b>	<b>226</b>	x 6	+ 874	90% OF IT	x 2	- 698	75% OF IT	- 889	<sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> OF IT	+ 673	<b>ANSWER</b>	

**Polygon**



From these letters, make words of **four** or more letters, always including the central letter. Answers must be in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, excluding capitalised words, plurals, conjugated verbs (past tense etc), adverbs ending in LY, comparatives and superlatives.  
**How you rate** 13 words, average; 18, good; 23, very good; 28, excellent

**Yesterday's answers**  
 amount, anomy, atom, atomy, atony, auto, **autonomy**, mayo, moan, moat, mono, monty, moon, moony, moot, mount, muon, notam, noyau, oaty, onto, tony, toon, unto

**Cell Blocks No 5208**

2				2
3		3	8	
	4			
	4		2	
3			2	10

Divide the grid into square or rectangular blocks, each containing one digit only. Every block must contain the number of cells indicated by the digit inside it.

**Set Square No 3827**

6	+		x		= 88
x			+		-
	x	2	-		= 14
÷			÷		+
	x		+		= 10
=		=		=	
18		7		11	

Enter each of the numbers from 1 to 9 in the grid, so that the six sums work. We've placed two numbers to get you started. Each sum should be calculated left to right or top to bottom.

Please note, BODMAS does not apply

**Killer Moderate No 9688**

13	24			12		18	4	
	3		18					14
19		10		10	16	17		
	7				7			
		11		14		7	19	
7	15	3	14	15				
			20					
	8		16	3	5	14		
23			7				12	

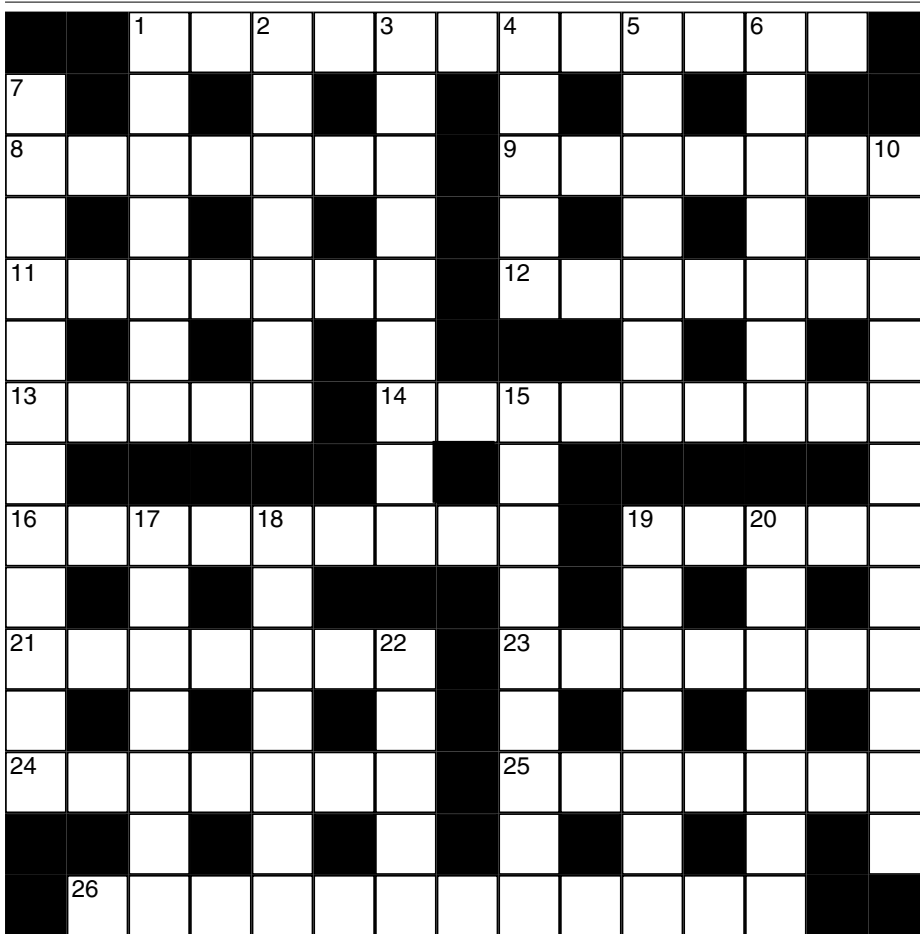
**Killer Deadly No 9689**

24			16			7	9	
8				22	13		19	
	27					12		18
9		22						
		6	21		22			
12							11	
8	20	13	29					8
				13				
8				4		24		

As with standard Sudoku, fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.

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Times Crossword 29,027



ACROSS

- 1 Temporary stable lad unseated here (8,4)
- 8 Rugby player from Falmouth carelessly knocking out male (3-4)
- 9 Scope of brief article on money (7)
- 11 Coach regularly coming from Torbay isn't about to return (7)
- 12 Carry cans home for preserving food (7)
- 13 Public penury, essentially (5)
- 14 Flee Milan, running with loved ones (2,7)
- 16 Deal for one accepted by great advocate (9)
- 19 Very oddly observed, loves motorway and noise of cars (5)
- 21 Child with poor seat for *As You Like It* (2,5)
- 23 Go to bed with gigolos, initially in rotation (7)
- 24 Topless worker occasionally cuddling former partner without desire (7)
- 25 Idiotic Head of Accounts is retiring before watershed? (7)
- 26 Lacking purpose, once missing church for example (6,6)

DOWN

- 1 In conversation claim female consumed surfeit (7)
- 2 Touching answer wins time (7)
- 3 Stay extremely desperate and become alcoholic (9)
- 4 VIP lifted prohibition of humming (5)
- 5 Broken humeri punctured by new metal (7)
- 6 Daring to cycle in front of bad cops (3,4)
- 7 Roaming US states Ohio and Georgia in part (5,7)
- 10 One embracing criminal secretly (6-6)
- 15 Perhaps William Spooner's cultivated reputation (5,4)
- 17 Basil perhaps is blind at first after choking smoke (7)
- 18 Little-known surgeon supporting oxygen therapy (7)
- 19 Harridans with spirit ousting earlier maidens (7)
- 20 View tear-jerker about end of Philip I (7)
- 22 Acclaim some rising digital celebrities (5)

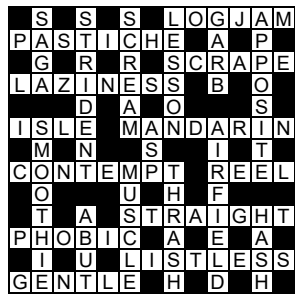
Yesterday's solution 29,026



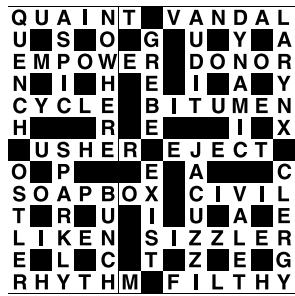
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Solutions

Quick Cryptic 2785



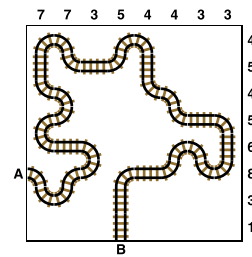
Codeword 5324



Kakuro 3823

2	9		4	1	2		1	6	
1	7	2	4	8	9	6		4	9
		4	9		5	4	1	3	
5	9			9	8	3	2		
2	8		1	7		8	3	2	5
1	6	2	8		6	1		4	8
		1	2	3	9			1	3
	9	4	7	8		9	5		
1	5		4	1	9	7	3	6	8
3	4		5	9	7			2	1

Train Tracks 2351



Sudoku 15,240

4	6	2	8	5	7	9	1	3
9	3	5	6	4	1	7	8	2
1	7	8	2	9	3	6	4	5
6	5	9	7	1	2	8	3	4
3	2	4	9	6	8	1	5	7
7	8	1	4	3	5	2	9	6
8	1	6	3	7	4	5	2	9
5	9	3	1	2	6	4	7	8
2	4	7	5	8	9	3	6	1

Tetonor 502

10	81	70	28
6 + 4	9 x 9	35 x 2	4 x 7
96	23	11	50
2 x 48	22 + 1	4 + 7	2 + 48
37	18	14	27
2 + 35	9 + 9	5 + 9	3 + 24
22	45	24	72
1 x 22	5 x 9	4 x 6	24 x 3

Sudoku 15,241

1	7	9	3	2	6	4	5	8
8	6	4	1	5	7	2	3	9
5	3	2	8	9	4	1	6	7
6	1	5	7	4	8	3	9	2
2	4	8	9	6	3	7	1	5
3	9	7	5	1	2	6	8	4
7	8	1	2	3	5	9	4	6
4	2	3	6	8	9	5	7	1
9	5	6	4	7	1	8	2	3

Cell Blocks 5207

A 5x5 grid with numbers and black squares. The numbers are: 2, 5, 3, 2, 3, 2, 2, 2, 5, 4, 10, 9.

Set Square 3826

8 ÷ 1 × 4  
 + × × ×  
 9 × 5 × 2  
 - + + +  
 7 × 6 - 3

Lexica 7665

G				S	
E	I	G	H	T	Y
M		A		O	
		P	A	C	E
					K
S	L	I	M	Y	

Sudoku 15,242

9	8	6	5	4	7	1	2	3
3	4	7	1	2	6	9	5	8
2	1	5	8	9	3	4	6	7
1	9	3	7	8	5	2	4	6
7	6	8	2	1	4	5	3	9
4	5	2	3	6	9	8	7	1
5	2	9	6	3	8	7	1	4
6	7	4	9	5	1	3	8	2
8	3	1	4	7	2	6	9	5

Futoshiki 4864

1 2 4 5 3  
 ^  
 2 5 3 4 1  
 ^  
 3 4 > 2 1 5  
 ^  
 4 1 5 > 3 2  
 ^  
 5 3 1 < 2 4  
 v

KenKen 6316

3	1	2	6	4	5
6	5	1	2	3	4
5	2	4	3	6	1
4	6	5	1	2	3
1	3	6	4	5	2
2	4	3	5	1	6

Lexica 7666

C		B			
A	L	I	A	S	
R		T		I	
V	I	C	A	R	
E		H		E	
	H	Y	E	N	A

Today's solutions

Killer 9686

3	2	4	5	9	1	6	7	8
9	8	1	6	7	3	5	4	2
7	5	6	4	2	8	9	1	3
2	6	9	7	4	5	8	3	1
4	7	3	8	1	9	2	6	5
8	1	5	3	6	2	7	9	4
1	4	7	2	8	6	3	5	9
5	9	2	1	3	7	4	8	6
6	3	8	9	5	4	1	2	7

Killer 9687

9	6	4	7	1	8	5	3	2
3	7	5	2	4	9	6	1	8
1	2	8	5	6	3	4	7	9
7	3	1	8	9	6	2	4	5
8	4	6	1	5	2	3	9	7
5	9	2	4	3	7	1	8	6
4	8	7	6	2	1	9	5	3
2	5	9	3	8	4	7	6	1
6	1	3	9	7	5	8	2	4

Cryptic Quintagram

- 1 Lease
- 2 Tunas
- 3 Jetty
- 4 Treason
- 5 Misarrange

Suko 4226

2	1	9
13	21	
3	7	4
23	25	
5	8	6

Brain Trainer

- Easy 31
- Medium 209
- Harder 1,472

Word watch

**Plateasm** (c) Talking with the mouth open too wide (*Collins*)

**Logodaedalus** (b) One skilled in the manipulative use of words (*Chambers*)

**Syssitia** (a) Meals eaten together in public (*OED*)

Chess – Winning Move

1 Nd6+! Bxd6 2 Bxd6! is surprisingly strong. The point is that 2 ... Qxd2 3 Ba6 is mate but, more importantly, the black queen will be trapped, eg 2 ... Kb7 3 Bb4! Qa4 4 b3 and if 4 ... Bxc2+ the calm 5 Kb2! is decisive