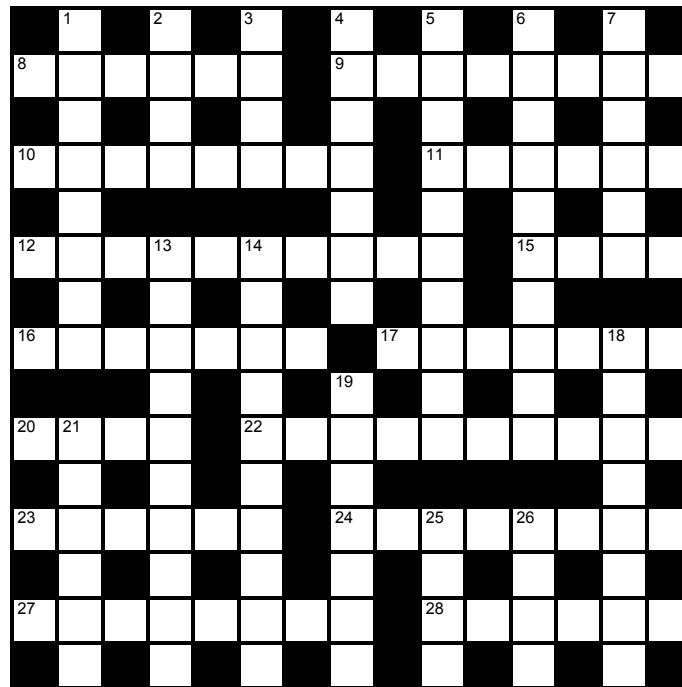


A Merry Christmas

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The perimeter, read from TOP-RIGHT, contains a seasonally merry wish: "Cold? Oh, laugh, blythe folk!" The message continues in 2/6/26 (4,3,4 etc)

Across

- 8 A pickle made of mouldy capers (6)
- 9 Continuing to grab a little teddy after mid-January (8)
- 10 Unbelieving person is stuck on top of tree (8)
- 11 Farrago at EEC surrounding restricted growth (6)
- 12 Large masks used by expert in floating or blowing, perhaps (5-5)
- 15 Type of acid with about a thousand and one uses (4)
- 16 Boatmen surround certain s-she-shark (7)
- 17 Miss embracing corrupt French naturalist (7)
- 20 Discovering Ohio mid-winter before the middle of October (4)
- 22 Rudolph's initial antics not modified by chains, perhaps (10)
- 23 4 pecks head of Simon Hoggart in blue mood (6)
- 24 Give instruction about a large amount of material used on tables (3,5)
- 27 Torn skin in Ghana? Nil desperandum (8)
- 28 Inclined to jog after the end of Christmas (6)

Down

- 1 Clue: opts out in 8s (8)
- 3 Half holly and ivy initially take Boatman back (4)
- 4 Cut piece of porterhouse steak in chunks or spheres to be thrown away (7)
- 5 Majority uprising: "Ensnare royal, take king!" (6,4)
- 7 Middle Easterner in "God rest ... merry gentle ... Boatman" (6)
- 13 Santa Claus initially holds a right to work with old woman and Boatman on objects found in the pyramids (10)
- 14 Cats perhaps witnessed sharp instrument (7,3)
- 18 Under the heading of "Christmas", one rose (pink) on hospital monument (8)
- 19 Invest in sales premises (7)
- 21 First Noel's offerings: unguents, gold and Turkish sweetmeat (6)
- 25 Snowman all wrapped up in orderly fashion (4)

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