## 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)

19 Old man's right to argue (4)

17 Conservative person with stoned foreign journalists (14)
one placed in reception room (10)

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 wigging 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)

