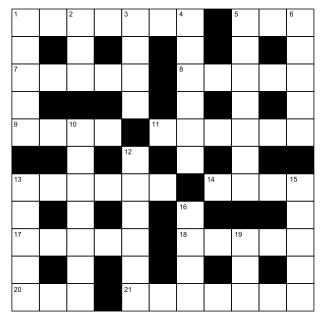
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CROPSWORD: By @stecks & @apaultaylor CROPSWORD: & @apaultaylor

Each clue contains three definitions to words which nest inside each other - one letter can be added or removed to get from the middle word, which is the grid entry, to the shorter and longer words.





Across

- 1. More inadequate pants that are hot to trot (7)
- 5. Get rid of fly resting in that place (3)
- 7. Look Saint one's throwing (5)
- 8. Measly cutting line isn't able to (5)
- 9. Frost and dirt along edge (4)
- 11. One disobeying instruction to put off dictionary? (6)
- 13. Melville hero it's a type of tank (6)
- 14. Hit comedy film's irritating child (4)
- 17. Unknown name for where baby is that's negative (5)
- 18. Walk to the helicopter, quickly! (5)
- 20. Before/about a lake (3)
- 21. Lived with wooden rods, got more intense (7)

Down

- 1. One petitioning for excellent meal (5)
- 2. Handle back of boat for short length (3)
- 3. Observe fixedly the large area and weight of the bowl (4)
- 4. Uninvited party attendee that demolishes bit of bacon (6)
- 5. Hotter, rougher bowler (7)
- 6. Shred of potato in gallery (5)
- 10. Write off woodwork, joining recess with rigor (7)
- 12. Was born, deposited and defeated in computer game (6)
- 13. Throw to the sky past the edge of the roof (5)
- 15. Look at the sign, walk on and pass between (5)
- 16. Moist substance consumed: meat spread (4)
- 19. He used Ziggy every drop (3)



The wordsearch grid contains some Christmas words. Clues run either left-to-right or topto-bottom. BUT: they've been encrypted! For each clue N+1, the grid is Caesar encrypted using the first letter of clue N as the key. Encrypting using A doesn't change anything, B shifts on by 1, C by 2 and so on. For example, the first row of the grid when decrypted with the key EXAMPLE would all be shifted by 4 letters, since they're all encoded with E:

LMEQFMWERRB

The first clue is "CHRISTMAS". Find the next clue, and the next, and so on until you find CHRISTMAS in the grid. As a bonus, each clue has a RED HERRING somewhere else in the grid.

PUZZLEBOMB.co.uk: assembled by @stecks.