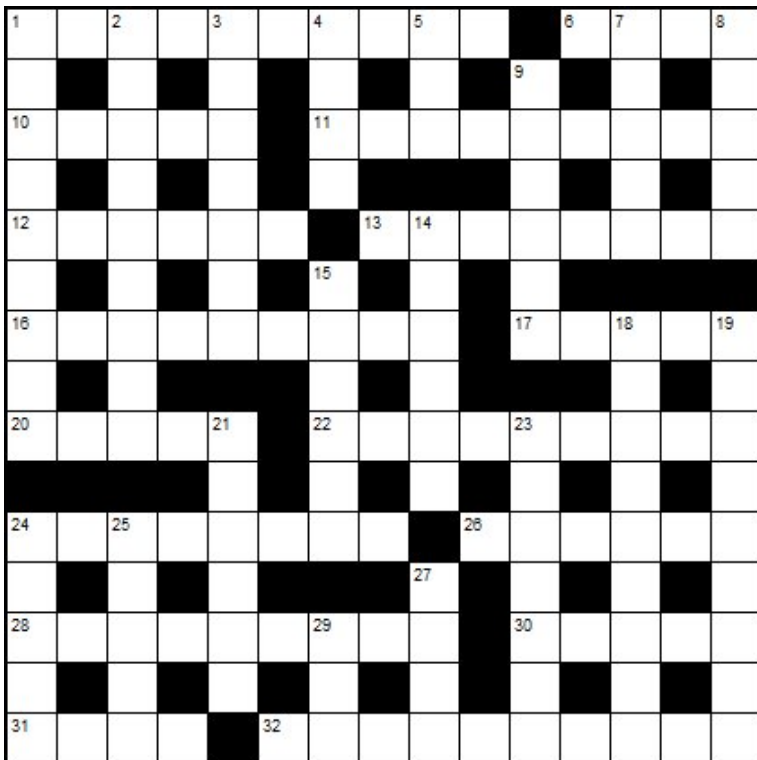


Puzzle 2 by Laccaria

This is the first puzzle I've published on this site for six months. I was stuck away from home without crossword software for several weeks due the pandemic, and then needed to catch up with my work for the *FT* and *Independent*. It is fitting that after a long hiatus, I am publishing an absolute belter of a puzzle! Laccaria makes a welcome return with a puzzle which is as close to perfect as I have received for a long time. All the clues are excellent, and I'd nominate 6 and 32 across, along with 2, 15 and 27 down, as favourites.



ACROSS

- 1 Something soft and powdery for bare bum (4,6)
 6 One who might have spelt, with no hesitation, "philosopher" (4)
 10 Selected exercise in reference book (5)
 11 Bearing deal, only half of it and not so generous, as reported (9)
 12 When welcoming Charlie, Spain, surprisingly, gets all jumpy (6)
 13 With relief, early sign of moss eradicated, when dividing plant (8)
 16 A Pole, with duty free, is soundly beaten (9)
 17 Thread of fairytale opening with death (5)
 20 Mendelssohn to make arrangement including early section of *Elijah* (5)
 22 Police charging person who's electing to conceal large instrument (9)
 24 French icon has hair disturbed by shower of rain (8)
 26 New hire's tormented with eye problem (6)
 28 He's first to go in to tidy up splitting red carpet (9)
 30 Furious Scorsese abandoning direction of *One Hundred and Twelve Degrees*, unexpectedly (5)
 31 Stolen loot's initially hidden in this underground retreat (4)
 32 Hated to see Batman die horribly, having gained nothing! (10)

DOWN

- 1 Reliable leader of Four, bare-foot on record cover (9)
 2 With this exercise Labour should succeed (9)
 3 Fundamental point missed by confused cardinal (7)
 4 Historian stated one of the things to worry over (4)
 5 Squirrel maybe concealing where he lives? (3)
 7 Decreases restraints? (5)
 8 Top game back in: sensational! (5)
 9 Remote Portuguese resort, very noisy (3-3)

- 14** Central (formerly East) Germany losing right to enter athletics event (6)
- 15** Arcadian fleet's sailing north, with fifty on board (6)
- 18** Utterly insensible, and dismissed (3-3-3)
- 19** Certain about article missing in Paris? Dupond finally caught out! (9)
- 21** Possibly revealed bones of adult, dead after turbulent year (1-5)
- 23** Second revolution in China is shock (7)
- 24** Physicist admits Rutherford's first to make progress (5)
- 25** Drive off outcast who's returned (5)
- 27** Was he born of a mother? (4)
- 29** Retreat of Bond villain, having missed kill – gutted! (3)