

ACROSS

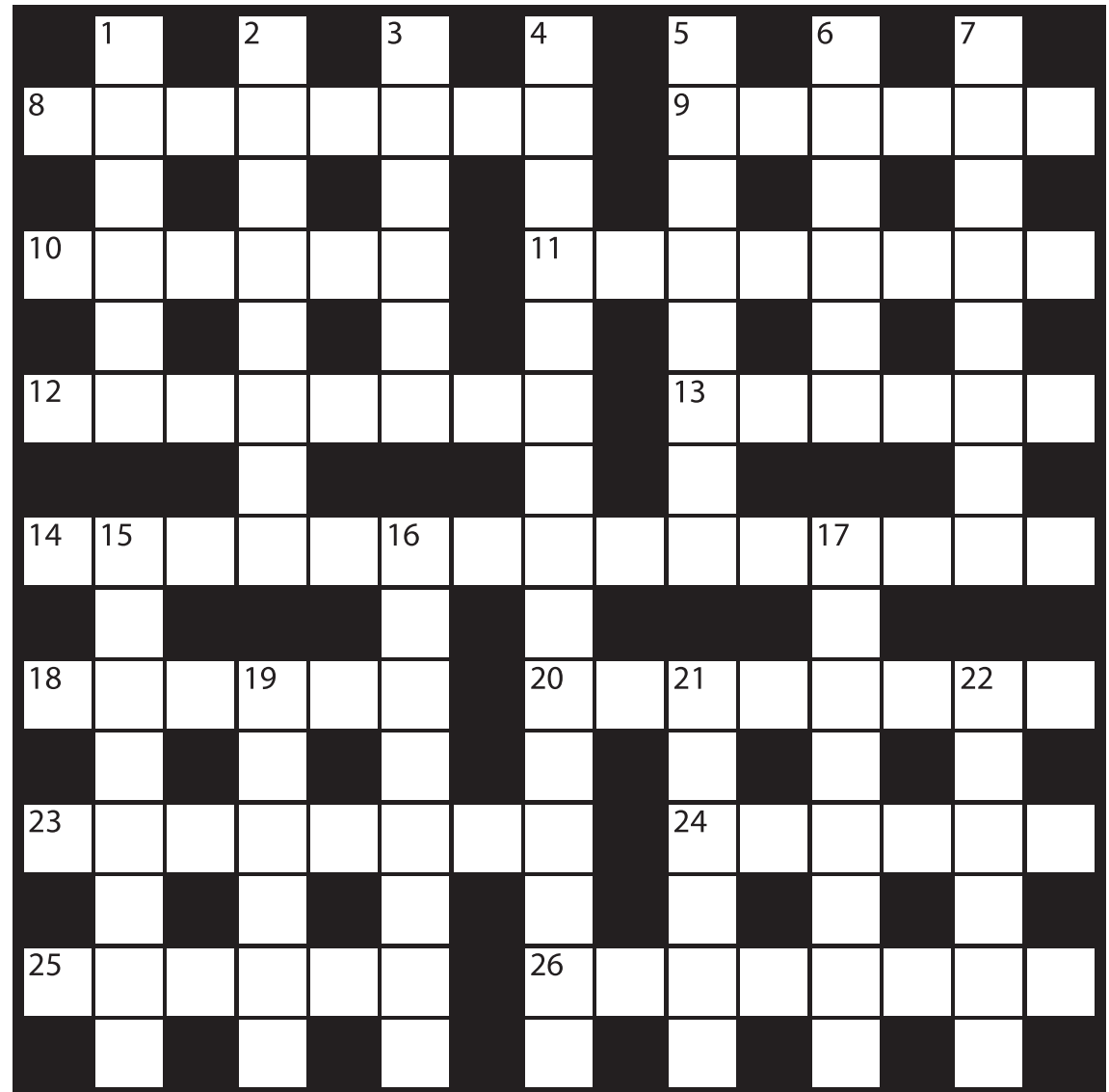
- 8 Macerate bananas for afternoon meal (5,3)
 9 Got rid of Times journalist (6)
 10 Indicator the French require up front (6)
 11 Extremely distinctive costume for ball (8)
 12 When soldiers go astray, one might accept contract (8)
 13 Good large drink for rabbit (6)
 14 Bill wears floral jackets, unusually versatile fellow (4,2,3,6)
 18 Fixed points, part of car engine (6)
 20 Cut uncertainty - remove vacuous demagogue (8)
 23 Continue exercise, eating stewed carrot (8)
 24 Proverb perhaps in Greek originally (6)
 25 Excellent band getting exposure (6)
 26 Leave country with corrupt regime protecting anarchist extremists (8)

DOWN

- 1 Cheese primarily for successful lawyers (6)
 2 Difficult second book (8)
 3 Highlight hair after end of restrictions (6)
 4 Good qualities vital in crusader abroad (8,7)
 5 Conservatives embracing fascists? It's a sign of danger (3,5)
 6 Young animals left in holes (6)
 7 Opponents raised abroad and left in Britain (8)
 15 Arctic regularly diminished by exhaust pollution (4,4)

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- 16 Dance enthusiast shot by desperate man (8)
 17 Metal experts like crime writer (8)
 19 Scottish food reportedly in poor condition (6)
 21 China's about to seize an advantage (4,2)
 22 Make speech about knight getting decorated (6)