

A		1		2		3	B	4		5	6		7	C
	8		9		10									
												11		
		12												
			13			14			15					16
	17										18	19		
								20						
										21				

Across clues are given as a continuous series of journeys starting at 21 and using the LIFTS in columns A, B and C. The first word moves to the right and its fifth letter goes in lift C; it then travels to another level (to be determined), where its 6th letter also goes in C. It then moves to the left until complete. The second word continues, using the next space on that level, still moving right to left, but changes level using lift B. The third word follows suit, but after changing level in left A, comes out moving left to right in the usual way. The sequence continues until 21 is reached again. The lift columns A, B and C spell out a dispiriting message. Down answers are normal. They include one abbreviation and one prefix (both in Chambers), and, at 13 and 18, words to be found in the OED. Both of these are variant spellings of words in Chambers (1991), though 13 is unusually variant!

ACROSS

Space agency, not without guts, encompassing one's rising
Transverse passage all but annoyed hare (*hyphenated*)
Plastic substance reconstructed from soya meat ultimately
Drunk about to walk back? Protection for members required
Antislavery prophet rebuffed in defeat (*hyphenated*)
Story about local fortune ebbing in phone marketing
Release Latin, one imprisoned by magistrate
Dives in which nameless old women will latch on to us
Keep looking behind and before you
One's healthy when taken in near smoker?
Showing no guilt about law network
Lights out around end of dinner in digs
Safety test incomplete – sudden movement in part of rigging
English sailor wrapped in Union Jack, the dirty tyke (*hyphenated*)
Assent to remould candle residue
Quit once nappy's turned over
Slow creatures, unwilling to get on board
Retorting: 'The salesman's flat out!'
Give a nudge about rented movie (that's been cut, granted)
Square lake employs ancient floodgates

DOWN

- 1 OK about Liberal's sudden exclamation (4)
- 2 Riding sea waves with power, moving like a starfish (10)
- 3 River treatment requires a skim of the surface (3)
- 4 Gravity missing in a lager brewed in some regions (5)
- 5 Rant tone is possibly this (10)
- 6 Poor exam performance involving educational staple is feeble (5)
- 7 Simple logarithmic base taking the role of variable (4)
- 8 Cross with Elgar's extremes – nothing dry in composition (4)
- 9 On stage? (3)
- 10 Angle, broadly speaking, for fish (4)
- 11 Mephistopheles or, conversely, a song from Goethe's pen (4)
- 12 One translated into Scots and Welsh again (4)
- 13 Ancient title for a gent is dearly purchased in France (5)
- 14 Girl wanting a ring? On the contrary (5)
- 15 Remove a party that's very loud (4)
- 16 Agreed: European Community may be overturned at any time (4)
- 17 Cover's against a rising bounce (4)
- 18 Lid of cedar from antique box (3)
- 19 Monkey's climbing it repeatedly (4)
- 20 Fail? That would mean getting nothing in this college (3)