Crossword 15,453 Set by Redshank

ACROSS
1 Sidekick managed church instead of shed (10)
6 Fly over and trace old Chinese house (4)
9 Impressive cryptic clue about northern relative (10)
10 “The Nymph”, late Chopin piece, forerunner of foxtrot (4)
12 Hard to assess one MP on breadline, sadly not elected (12)
15 Dancing girl nearly stops exotic Madras carnival (5,4)
17 Miss coming back to control international plant (5)
18 Slip and fall, knocking out officer (5)
19 Libertine breaks 10 rules (9)
20 Spot boxes where divers hope not to get spotted (7,5)
24 Flag of Ireland Hungary banned (4)
25 Many bribed corrupt person responsible for tots (4-6)
26 Classic garment in Friendly Islands (bar November) (4)
27 Study English judge jailing, say, reprobate (10)

DOWN
1 Old ship formerly carrying rare freight out of Cuba (4)
2 Tea-time talk (4)
3 Nice girl produced wine, I gathered (12)
4 Fast Othello finale? On the contrary (5)
5 Couples regularly surveyed back roads going nowhere (4-2-3)
7 See boss teasing man on board (10)
8 Reaction to cold in Gander? (10)
11 Question: is romance ruined when it is boring? (5-7)
13 Dash round shopping centre for contract details? (5,5)
14 Top surgeon’s job in theatre blocking UV treatment (10)
16 Contest concerning amateur people (5,4)
21 What Box and Cox do about hosting Carol no end (5)
22 Assistant’s first to finish almost perfect plan (4)
23 Bank in Edinburgh daring to sack 5 (4)

Copies of How to Sound Clever by Hubert van den Bergh and So You Think You Can Spell by David L. Grambs and Ellen S. Levine, published by A&C Black, will be awarded to the senders of the first three correct entries opened on Wednesday February 1. Entries marked Crossword 15,453 on the envelope, should be sent to Weekend FT, One Southwark Bridge, London SE1 9HL. Solution on February 4.