

The Listener Crossword Setters' Dinner 13th March 2010 : Chepstow

This year's Crossword Setters' Dinner was — as is now the norm — organised by **Jago** and Jan and was held on Saturday, 13th March, at the Marriott St Pierre Resort Hotel in Chepstow: within sight of the two Severn Bridges, and thus continuing the “bridge” theme from 2009.

We were overwhelmed this year with 107 guests — 30 more than last year — including 45 Listener Setters, who were (in alphabetical order): **Arcturus, Arepo, BeRo, Brimstone, Buff, Bufo, Charybdis, Derek, Dimitry, Elap, Elgin, Elint, Enigmatist, Gioconda, Gos, Hamamelis, Henry, Homer, Hypnos, Jago, Jasan, Kea, Lato, Leo, Merlin, Mespot, Mr Lemon, Mr Magoo, MynoT, Nibor, Pabulum, Phalarope, Pilcrow, Ploy, Politicaster, Radix, Raich, Samuel, Shackleton, Sibyl, Tea Leaves, Third Man, Trev, Verbascum and Viking**. The other attendees were either guests of the Setters, or were Solvers who had attended in the past and/or who were one of the 26 “all corrects” from the 2009 Listener Puzzles. Apologies were received from **Alberich, Arachne, Cheiron, Colleague, Foxglove, Hedge-sparrow, Macbu/2** (who is not very well), **Ozzie, Phi** (who emailed a suggestion that his message should be folded!), **Piccadilly, Poat, Sabre, Schadenfreude, Serendip, Theod** (also poorly), **Tiburon, Wasp and Xanthippe** (a last-minute drop-out). Apologies and best wishes were also received from Dave Tilley (a long-time solver) who has been in hospital too, but who is now out.

So on to the Prizes: the leader of the “all-corrects” was once again Simon Long, who won the *Solver Silver Salver* in 2008; and this year's runner-up — who thus received the Salver in his own right — was Neil Talbott. (Justin Daddow, who was last year's Salver winner, couldn't make it then; and unfortunately couldn't make it again this year either — but he therefore has an outstanding invitation for next year — and a free Dinner still to come.) Neil Talbott duly accepted the Salver from **Kea** (Roger Phillips), who is of course the new “first vetter” for Listener puzzles. After a concise, but nonetheless very interesting, speech from Neil about the selection process for the *Ascot Gold Cup*, which led up to the announcement of the winning puzzle of 2010, the honours were then reversed. It was **Kea's** puzzle *Admission*, about George Washington cutting down the cherry tree, that was declared the Gold Cup winner — and Neil thus presented the trophy to **Kea**. (Incidentally, this is his fourth win overall and his second successive win.) In second place was *Much Ado About Nothing* by **Shackleton**; in third place was *X* by **Pilcrow**; in fourth place was *In Clue Order, On an On* by **Loda**; and in fifth place was *Rules of Construction* by **Poat**. Neil also made special mention of *Intimacy* by **Bandmaster** as having, in his opinion, the best set of clues.

The third (and by now well-established) element of our Dinner involved **Tea Leaves' Table Quiz** and the awarding of the *Bronze Casket*. The “tie-breaker” this year involved having to draw a pictorial interpretation of “cruciverbalism”; amazingly, **Jago's** table won the prize (through no great contribution on his part, he admits: but then **Kea** was on the same table, so what could you expect?). At the end of the night, **Jago** and Jan found themselves in charge of the Casket — so they have promised to re-fill it and bring it next year.

Chambers Harrap were unable to field a guest this year; but they kindly donated copies of the *Chambers Concise Dictionary*, so **Jago** organised a raffle, in aid of the Haiti Earthquake Appeal, which raised the sum of £110 — so many thanks to all who bought tickets.

As always, the evening went into “mingling” mode. Last stragglers at the bar went to bed at around 4am — so not a bad event, really!

Finally, next year's Dinner will be held on Saturday 12th March, in the North or Midlands (Yorkshire / Derbyshire) at a venue to be announced.

Jim Coulson (Jago)

March 2010