

THE TIMES LISTENER CROSSWORD SETTERS' DINNER 2011

The 2011 Crossword Setters' Dinner was held on Saturday 12th March at the Kenwood Hall Hotel in Sheffield – on the same day as the Lib Dem Spring Conference (just a coincidence!). The date had been 'reserved' in advance by John Green, so as to coincide with his 'numeric' 25 years of checking Solutions to the Listener Crossword (1,300 in total, divided by 52 = 25, as he himself wrote). Fittingly, it was a **Trev** puzzle *Ringtone* that became number 4128.

This year we were very slightly down on the fantastic 107 who attended Chepstow; but we still managed 94 diners, of whom, exactly 50% were Setters: **Aldhelm, Arepo, BeRo, Brimstone, Brock, Bufo, Charybdis, Cheiron, Derek, Duck, Elap, Elint, Enigmatist, Gos, Hamamelis, Henry, Homer, Hypnos, Jago, Kea, Lato, Leo, Macbu, Machiavelli, Mespot, Mr Lemon, Nibor, Pilcrow, Pabulum, Ploy, Pointer, Politicaster, Radix, Raich, Samson, Samuel, Shackleton, Spud, Stan, Stick Insect, Tea Leaves, Third Man, Tiburon, Trev, Verbascum, Xanthippe** and **Wasp**.

As usual, other attendees were either guests of the Setters, or were Solvers who had attended in the past and/or who were among the 21 all-corrects from the 2010 Listener Puzzles (a few down on last year; but still an impressive number). One notable Solver attendee was Dave Tilley – thankfully out of hospital in time, this year. Apologies were received from **Centigram, Essira, Hedge-Sparrow, Loda, Mr E, Phi, Poat, Qadi** and **Sabre**. And of course we said goodbye to 'our very own' Derek Arthur (**Viking**), who will be greatly missed. Sadly, we must also record the passing of John McGlashan (**Hubris**) and Harold Massingham (**Mass**). [Because of Derek's untimely demise, Roger Phillips was rapidly promoted from First Vetter to Second Vetter/Crossword Editor and Shane Shabankareh suddenly found himself elevated to the Listener 'peerage' as First Vetter.]

And so to the awarding of the Prizes: the leader of the all-corrects was once again Simon Long, who had received the Solver Silver Salver in 2008; and last year's SSS winner, Neil Talbott, was second (present now as a Setter - **Elint**). Thus, as per tradition, the Solver Silver Salver went to the third-placed all-correct, who was John Reardon. Unfortunately, John was recovering from an operation and couldn't attend, so his acceptance speech was delivered on his behalf by Shane Shabankareh, who also received the trophy for him (as Shane said, it was the only way of getting his hands on both the Silver Salver and the Ascot Cup!). John's speech outlined the selection process for awarding the Ascot Gold Cup. The three runners up, in reverse order, were **Elgin** (*A Change of Clothing*), **Spud** (*European Revolution*) and **Kea** (*Table-Turning*). The winner of the AGC for the 2010 season was John Guiver aka **Shackleton** (*Sine Qua Non*) with only his third Listener puzzle – quite an achievement.

The final part of the Dinner prize-giving was for **Tea Leaves'** Table Quiz, which this year required guests to work out "Spoonerised" rebuses of drinks (e.g., Pam (Ayres), Shane (Warne) = Champagne); and then to draw their own, as the tie-breaker. The Bronze Casket went to Table 11, by virtue of having brought along coloured pens for more impressive artwork! Of course, they will have to refill the trophy for next year. As a slight twist, Roddy Forman and Shirley Curran patrolled the dining room and bar, collecting cash in exchange for sweets from the Casket since **Phi** (Paul Henderson) had asked if we would make an appeal on behalf of the recent Christchurch earthquake, now that he lives in New Zealand. Thanks to Roddy and Shirley, we collected a little over £300 for the appeal – well done!

Before declaring the Dinner at an end, Jago announced that next year's Listener Dinner will be held on one of the first 3 Saturdays in March, somewhere in London (it being 2012 and a certain Sporting Event being scheduled to happen in our Capital City later that year).

After all the 'formalities', the guests spent some time in the Function Room Bar (where there was a barrel of Real Ale), before being ushered back to the main Hotel Bar at about 12.30. Last stragglers were seen there at around 5.00am.

Jim Coulson (Jago)

March 2011