The Listener Crossword Setters' Dinner 1977 : London

This year's dinner was the fifth since organisation was taken over by **Ploutos**, following a lapse of several years after the death of the previous organiser **Odysseus**. In all 57 people came, of whom 27 were setters and 30 guests, including 4 solvers of outstanding merit.

Setters:	**Adam, Aeschylus, Apex, Ascot, Brym, Cuth, Duck, Generalissimo, Hal, Jago, Jasan, Jude, Klick, Leiruza, Machiavelli, Merlin, Nibor, Peto** (2 persons)**, pH7, Ploutos, Sabre, Smada, Smokey, Twudge, Virgilius, Zander**

Solvers:	**R M S Cork**	–	this year's winner – all correct
	F G Adams	}	
	E S Ainley	}	joint runners-up – two wrong
	J A Sever	}	

Special Guests:	**Mrs P Bourne**	Crossword Editor of THE LISTENER
	E Burt	Designer, who draws all the puzzle grids
	J E Evans	'The Vet', who scrutinises all puzzles submitted for publication
	R Millington	Author of 'The Strange World of the Crossword'

Diners found themselves faced with totally blank menu cards as they took their places, a circumstance readily explained by the chairman who, it appeared, had left the printed menus at home in Yorkshire – there was some garbled story about this really being his wife's fault (which nobody believed) – and had, therefore, found some drawing books at Woolworth's, the blank pages of which he invited diners to fill in as they went along.

Fortunately Ye Olde Cock Tavern decided to provide the food originally ordered and the fare was speedily disposed of with appropriate liquid refreshment. Hence, with coffee on the table, the assembled company was ready for the first of the speeches, from E S Ainley who proposed the toast to THE LISTENER, a magazine more important to many (and certainly to those present) for $\frac{1}{64}$ of its content three weeks out of four, then for all the other pearls it might contain. Mrs Bourne replied on behalf of THE LISTENER, expressing her thanks for an invitation to an event which she enjoyed each year, and her regret at the continued stubbornness of the Editor regarding that missing week.

Next to rise was **Duck**, who discoursed knowledgeably upon 'The Author', running through the standard required reading of any cruciverbal bibliophile, from the earliest days, through the legendary **Afrit**, **Torquemada** and **Ximenes**, to the most recent and definitive work by Alec Robins (known to us as **Zander**). Unfortunately it will not be given to many of us, as it was to **Duck**, to come across copies of the earlier treasured masterpieces in second-hand bookshops in Salisbury (or anywhere else!) and we can only envy him this good fortune.

The reply to this toast came from Roger Millington, who explained that he is not really a crossword man at all – apparently his next book is a 'Jack the Ripper' – and then proceeded to regale us with a brief history on the early patents on crosswords and crossword games, with illustrations and readings revealing minds from the '30s and '40s no less tortured than those of today.

The final entertainment of the evening was provided by Mr Cork, the leading solver, who accompanied by his wife at the piano, sang of 'My achievement, the thirty-nine steps' to a medley of popular tunes and some of his own devising. Some setters were treated kindly, receiving barely a mention in his 'concert-ed' attack upon them; others suffered rather more. Thus:

> 'I was sure **Sabre**'s square and that **Babs** was no poet'
>
> or   '**Leiruza** and his drunk and barmy brights'
>
> or   '**Aelfre**, I think he's bats in the belfry'

Some gentle chiding 'Tea for two, for **Adam** and me, Mr Chugglewit had a tea for free' and heartfelt remarks 'I *hate* all these **Ad**s', (a reference firstly to a misspelling by the setter, and secondly to quite the most difficult puzzle of the year).

However, his audience was clearly enraptured by the whole performance, and enormous applause greeted this tour-de-force. As the chairman remarked, in closing the official evening: 'Nothing can follow that, let us retire to the bar'.

And so we all did, until throwing out time. A great evening was had by all.