

The Listener Crossword Setters' Dinner 8th October 1988 : London

This was held at the Drury Lane Moat House Hotel on Saturday, 8th October, and a report by Alan Coren has already appeared in The Times Diary of Wednesday, 12th October.

It was a new revival of the dinner, at a new venue, and with a new Editor in attendance. And a splendid turnout – even with last-minute absences from **Alban**, **Kea**, **Klick** and **Xmas** there were 48 setters present:

Adam, **Aeschylus**, **Amicus**, **Albipediis**, **Bart**, **BeRo**, **Blod** (2 persons), **Brym**, **Buff**, **Bufo**, **Calmac**, **Casein**, **Centigram**, **Corylus**, **Cuth**, **Dimitry**, **Doc**, **Duck**, **Eel**, **Foxglove**, **Generalissimo**, **Gong**, **Gos**, **Goujeers**, **Hamamelis**, **Hellebore**, **Imbricata**, **Jago**, **Jewel** (2 persons), **Jude**, **Law**, **Llig**, **Macbu** (2 persons), **Machiavelli**, **Mass**, **Mespot**, **Mime**, **Nibor**, **Notlaw**, **Phalarope**, **Phi**, **Ploutos**, **Politicester**, **Salamanca**, **Simian**, **sPHinx**, **Trev**, **Zander**.

Among the 29 guests were:

Alan Coren – Editor of THE LISTENER
Kate Burnett – Crossword Editor of THE LISTENER
Louise Levene – Crossword Editor of THE INDEPENDENT

The speeches that followed the excellent meal were interesting – at least, once **Phi** had sat down. He said a few well-chosen words (often as many as one a sentence) before passing on the good wishes from absent solvers. He then carefully omitted the toast to absent friends (for which he apologises); he also neglected to remember the setters who have passed on since the last dinner: **Egma**, **ffancy** and **Log**.

Eventually he introduced James Leonard (an “all-correct” solver from a dinnerless year). James showed how it should be done, giving a brief and pertinent toast to the setters.

At this point, a diversion occurred. The next speaker – not listed in the menu – was Robin Baxter (“all-correct” this year). He quickly surveyed the year’s puzzles, selecting his top five, which were announced in reverse order. The reason for this? Simply that **Ascot** has, very generously, donated a trophy – The Listener Ascot Gold Cup (it is of course, a *silver* rose-bowl) – for the top solver of a given year to present to the setter of his favourite puzzle of that year. Robin duly handed the trophy to – **Mime**, for ‘No Clues’. But there was more: **Ascot** had also endowed The Listener Solver Silver Salver, to be presented in the opposite direction to the Cup.

Both winners retired with their booty, and **Law** was at last able to reply to James’s toast. **Law**’s speech also surveyed the year in the form of an uplifting anecdote concerning two crossword veters (any similarity ... is purely intentional). In the course of his tale, **Law** incorporated the title of every Listener puzzle this year. (Perhaps he ought to be writing this?)

The toast was thus courtesy of **Amicus**: ‘Thursday’s Child – or THE LISTENER, plus Mighty A. Coren’ – so who better to reply than Mighty A. Coren himself? He expressed his gratitude for being invited, and pledged continued support for the crossword (to the extent of an increase in the setters’ fee; and there are plans for a new departure at Christmas, and a special for No. 3,000 – of which more anon). And so the speeches drew to a close, and the evening relaxed into unrestricted bonhomie.

The next Dinner will be in Harrogate, in October, 1989 – **Jago** is even now contemplating the prospect; and then, in 1990, the venue will be South Wales, under the supervision of **Gos**. After all, we have annual trophies to present now ... But before that is No. 3,000.

It is possible that a dinner to celebrate No. 3,000 will be held. This will be very much along the lines of the dinner for No. 2,500, and both setters and solvers will be invited. The venue is likely to be either Birmingham or Leeds. The date: late April, possibly 29th. But it is only a thought at present; before details can be sorted out, some indication of demand is required. If any one reading this (setter or solver) would be interested in attending such a function, please could they write to M C C Rich, 13 Church Lane, Ripon, North Yorkshire, HG4 2ES.

(Phi)