

The Listener Crossword Setters' Dinner 1st March 2003 : Cambridge

The 2003 dinner was held at the Gonville Hotel, Cambridge.

There were 57 setters attending:

A8 RGG, Adam, Aedites, Aragon, Arcturus, Ark, Auctor, BeRo, Buff, Bufo, Bundle, Caper, Charybdis, Colleague, Derek, Dimitry, Doc, Elgin, Enigmatist, Gioconda, Gos, Hamamelis, Henry, His Nibs, Jago, Jasan, Leo, Loda, Macbu (2 persons), Machiavelli, Mespot, Monk, Mordred, Mr Lemon, Mynot, Nibor, Owzat, Pabulum, Petti, Phalarope, Phi, Pilcrow, Plausus, Politicaster, Psyche, Quinapalus, Radix, Rebel, Samson, Tea Leaves, The Irishman, Third Man, Tiburon, Trev, Verbascum, Viking.

It was also a good year for all-correct solvers (15), most of whom attended, and thus with guests we made up a party of 128, by some margin the best attendance to date. This must have been aided by the lower-than-usual price of the dinner, which was due to very generous sponsorship from *The Times*, but also because Cambridge is a very felicitous place to visit.

The occasion was overshadowed by the death, shortly after last year's dinner at Derby, of Mike Rich (**Ploutos**) – setter, solver, editor, event-arranger, and all-round cruciverbalist – and those present were silent for a short while in memory of this unique figure. We also remembered **Ram**, who had died a few days before the Derby dinner.

Another absent friend prompted happier thoughts, and we acknowledged **Apex**, Eric Chalkley's MBE being the first honour for a crossword setter.

The 15 all-correct solvers included a number of previous holders of the salver, who all graciously yielded precedence so that a new name could be inscribed: Stuart Tarrant. Stuart, whose first all-correct year this was, was there to collect his trophy (the *Solver Silver Salver*). He also announced the winner of the *Ascot Gold Cup* for best puzzle of the year. This had been voted upon by all 15 all-correct solvers. Although in previous years there had been a close contest, this year saw a runaway winner in **Sabre's** *Author*, which was the favourite puzzle of most of the all-correct solvers (even including one who actually placed it second!). The race for second place was much closer, with **Samson's** *Point to Point* just edging out **Tea Leaves' Hope is a Six-Letter Word**.

After the formal business of the evening, we rapidly moved to mingle in and around the bar. Here's to next year – while a venue has yet to be decided, there seemed to be a strong possibility of Durham. Looking further ahead, we have an opportunity to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Listener Crossword itself in 2005. The first puzzle (A Radiapt Crossword) appeared on 26th February 1930 – commendable forethought, that, as this means 26th February 2005 falls on a Saturday. It may be worth pencilling that date into your diaries now ...