

The Listener Crossword Setters' Dinner 2nd April 2005 : Birmingham

This year was the 75th anniversary of The Listener Crossword, and the dinner was held on the very date – April 2nd – that puzzle No. 1 first appeared in 1930. The invitation was extended to as many setters and solvers as we could accommodate; in the end, 141 people turned up, including five of the seven solvers all-correct for 2004 and 49 setters, namely:

A8 RGG, Alberich, Aldhelm, Aragon, Arcturus, Ark, Auctor, Bero, Blod [½], Caper, Charybdis, Derek, Dimitry, Duck, Elap, Elgin, Enigmatist, Gioconda, Gong, Gos, Hamamelis, Hellebore, Henry, His Nibs, Jago, Kea, Lato, Macbu [½], Machiavelli, Merlin, Mespot, Mordred, Mr Lemon, Mr Magoo, MynoT, Nibor, Noggs, Obiter, Pabulum, Phi, Pilcrow, Ploy, Politicaster, Radix, Tea Leaves, Third Man, Tiburon, Trev, Verbascum and Viking.

At the last moment both **Bandmaster** and **Doc** were unable to attend, and sent apologies.

The venue was the Hyatt Regency International hotel in Birmingham (an excellent venue), and people came from across the UK, as well as Ireland, Germany, Belgium and the USA. Attendees received a souvenir menu (already a collectors' item), prepared by Derek Arthur, which included a brief history of the early days (with sample puzzles) and some summary statistics, provided by John Green. It emerged during the course of the evening that John is about to check through the solutions of his thousandth puzzle (No. 3828, as it happened).

It was a difficult job to summarise 75 years of crosswords. **Phi** turned to a letter he had received from a remarkable gentleman by the name of E C (Ted) Hunt. Ted recounted some of the history of the early days, and he should know – he won his first prize in December 1933. He was 90 exactly one week after the dinner, and the assembled diners happily signed one of the menus as a present. We also signed a menu for **Apex**, who was in hospital at the time, and we wished him well.

The trophies were presented as always. There were seven all-correct solvers, who were last unsuccessful with the following puzzles:

D McNeill	3649
S Anthony	3674
M Goodliffe	3681
J A Sever	3708
J Minter & S Perks	3727
A Edward	3738
J Allman	3740

David McNeill agreed to give up his continuing claim to the *Solver Silver Salver*, and so the award for most successful solver went to Simon Anthony, who delivered a speech outlining the trials of a determined all-correct solver (including the Listener's uncanny ability to throw up difficult puzzles during his – surprisingly frequent – holidays). He organised a vote among the all-correct solvers, and found himself with a tie at the end of the process. The two puzzles tying were both by **Elgin**, but the *Ascot Gold Cup* is engraved with the names of individual puzzles, and Simon's casting vote went to *Koeql Haeospo*, a mix of a number of thematic elements, culminating in the decoding of the title as *Giant Despair*, while the instances of the letters of DOUBTING in the grid formed the shape of a chess castle. It was a popular choice.