

The Listener Crossword Setters' Dinner 11th March 2006 : Luton

The 2006 Dinner was held at the Thistle Hotel, Luton; and was attended by 76 guests (originally 80 had booked, but there were four cancellations, of which three were almost literally at the last minute).

46 Setters attended (including **Jago**, who had organised the bash) — and it would have been 48, but for two of the four late non-attenders). Present were: **A8 RGG, Adam, Aldhelm, Aragon, Arcturus, Ark, Athene, Bandmaster, BeRo, Bufo, Charybdis, Derek, Dimitry, Elap, Elgin, Essira, Fresco, Gos, Henry, His Nibs, Homer, Jago, Kea, Lato, Macbu (½), Machiavelli, Mespote, Mordred, Mr Lemon, Mr Magoo, Nibor, Obtrox, Pabulum, Phalarope, Pieman, Pilcrow, Ploy, Politicaster, Radix, Tea Leaves, Third Man, Tiburon, Trev, Viking and Xanthippe**. Apologies were received from: **Alberich, Auctor, Blank, Buff, Centigram, Cheiron, Colleague, Dipper, Duck, Enigmatist, Glow-Worm, Hamamelis, Hera, Hotspur, Jasan, Lavatch, Mass, Monk (last-minute), Owzat, Ozzie, Piccadilly, Qadi, Sabre, Samson, Schadenfreude, Serendip, Sol, Virgilius ...** and last but not least, **Phi**.

Phi sent an email to **Jago** which read: “Greetings from windy Wellington. As many people will know, I now live in New Zealand, where the Listener Puzzle appears properly on *The Times* site on Saturday mornings, and the Listener magazine (with crossword) still appears weekly. It’s an odd situation to be writing this sort of note after being involved in organising the dinner for so long. What has Jim done differently? (I have to say I don’t think I’d ever have taken you to Luton, for one.) What has he done better? I will endeavour to think of you over breakfast (the gap is 13 hours just now) and send you all best wishes. I will try to return at some future dinner. Well done, Jim ...”

(He also sent **Jago** an emailed photograph of himself “posing” by a new car (bare-footed) with the registration “PHI 1” — so Jim had it copied and issued as a Caption Competition during the dinner ... the winning entry was: “Feet Phi? Ho-hum ...”)

After a very good dinner and several (anagrammed) cheeses, the presentation of the *Solver Silver Salver* took place. This year (based on the 2005 puzzles) there were ten final “all corrects” — in reverse order: Mark Helsdon, Julian West, Ross Lawther, Phil Lloyd, Simon Long, Roddy Forman, Nicholas Maxwell, Dennis and Neil Aspland, and the final two being Mark Goodliffe and last year’s winner, Simon Anthony. In theory, since Simon had the better unbroken record, he could have been declared this year’s winner, but he did the honourable thing and passed it down to the next never-before-winner: Mark Goodliffe.

On behalf of the ten all-corrects, Mark enumerated a number of very good puzzles which were in the running for the *Ascot Gold Cup*: but the runaway winner was *Safe Cracking* by **Kea**: which was declared to be “cracking” by all of the 10 best solvers. This year proved to be a “bumper” year for all-correct solvers; and in fact by November, there were still 20 of them! (Even by year-end, there were 19 solvers who had dropped only ONE puzzle!) Thus it has been decided that only the absolute winner in future will be invited to have a “free” dinner on the Setters — especially since the Times has not offered any sponsorship.

There was formal announcement of the launch (that day) of <http://www.listenercrossword.com>

Finally, brief thanks must go to **Tea Leaves** for creating two very entertaining quizzes: a version of his *Picture Quiz*, whereby Setters’ pseudonyms had to be deduced from various visual clues; and an *Alternative Menu* puzzle — which was eventually won by Table 5 (I think!).

As usual, chatting, smoking and drinking went on until the small hours ... and the Listener Dinner was once again pronounced a success.

The 2007 Dinner will again be organised by **Jago**; and it will be in York ... probably in the first or second week of March.

Jim Coulson (**Jago**)