

## THE TIMES LISTENER CROSSWORD SETTERS' DINNER – 2012

The 2012 Times Listener Crossword Setters' Dinner took place on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> March at the Churchgate Hotel in Old Harlow, Essex. The place was in a surprisingly rural setting and boasted a half-decent leisure centre. Even better, though, was the presence of a half-timbered inn – The Queen's Head – less than 5 minutes' walk away, which provided no fewer than 3 real ales. (Although they *did* have fewer, by the time our horde of setters and solvers had finished around 6 o'clock-ish!)

The Dinner itself attracted a near-record 109 attendees, and before the meal Jago requested all of them to fill in Jan's update form on the table, which would help him and Jan to ensure that as few invitations as possible (to the 2013 Dinner) would go astray in future. The same request is now extended to others who may read this Dinner Report – please let us have your current preferred contact details, so we don't miss you off our list. You can email your details to Jago at [dinner@listenercrossword.com](mailto:dinner@listenercrossword.com).

After a tolerably decent meal had been consumed, Jago proposed the toast to 'absent friends'. Apologies had been received from a number of solvers and also from the following Setters: **Brock, Centigram, Cheiron, Colleague, Gioconda, Hedge-sparrow, Nudd, Phi, Piccadilly and Wasp**. Also, sadly, Chris Butler was once again needing hospital treatment and his mother Margaret had died in February (they were of course, jointly, **Machbu**). Chris wrote to say he hopes to be at the 2013 gathering – and we wish him well. We also said farewell to **Mass**, who died just after the 2011 Dinner and to Glyn Hinde, a former Solver Silver Salver winner, who died in January.

There were 50 setters present: **Aldhelm, Arepo, BeRo, Brimstone, Buff, Bufo, Charybdis, Derek, Elint, Enigmatist, Hamamelis, Henry, Homer, Hypnos, Ilver, Jago, Kea, Lato, Leo, Machiavelli, Mash, Mespot, Mr Lemon, Mr Magoo, MynoT, Nibor, Nod, Noggs, Obtrox, Pabulum, Pilcrow, Ploy, Pointer, Politicaster, Quinapalus, Radix, Raich, Rok, Samuel, Shackleton, Shark, Stan, Stick Insect, Tea Leaves, The Irishman, Third Man, Tiburon, Trev, Verbascum and Xanthippe**, along with nearly 60 Listener Puzzle Solvers and other guests/partners. Some were attending their first ever TLCS – including local Peter Mabey, who has been solving the Listener puzzle since the late 1940s! We were also delighted to welcome David Thomson, Bishop of Huntingdon, who is an avid Listener solver (and who was prevailed upon to say a simple and universal Grace).

The last part of the formal proceedings was of course devoted to the presentations. This year there were 16 all-corrects, of whom Simon Long was still way out in front, with Neil Talbott close(ish) behind him. In third place was Philip Sant, to whom, as the highest never-before recipient of the SSS, the coveted trophy was duly presented. (Philip declared his intention to "retire" from serious contention after having reached 300 not out!) In time-honoured fashion, Philip discussed the previous year's puzzles (in the manner of *If* by Rudyard Kipling) and he then declared the winner of the Ascot Gold Cup to be *Carte Blanche with a Twist* by Mash – after doing a mime of the theme (!?). **Mash** then came up to receive his trophy to great applause and general acclaim. Great fun was also had with **Tea Leaves'** now traditional table quiz for the Bronze Casket, which was this year based on rebuses of countries and their capitals. After the Dinner was concluded, the usual well-lubricated chatting and mingling took place, and last stragglers were seen heading bedwards at about 4.00am.

No formal announcement was made as to the location of the 2013 Dinner, but we hope to see as many as possible in the North West (possibly Chester – though don't book your tickets just yet!) next March.

Jim Coulson – March 2012