

## The Times Listener Crossword Setters' Dinner – 2016

This year's Dinner took place at the Beaumont Estate in Old Windsor, an enormous site (a former Catholic School, among other things) with over 400 bedrooms. The Dinner itself was held in the restored Chapel, originally designed by Joseph Hansom (he of the Cab). All of the guests were suitably impressed by the sumptuous surroundings and both the food and the atmosphere lived up to those initial impressions. A near-record number of guests attended – 131 in all. There was one no-show, and three guests had dropped out in the previous 24 hours, but to counteract that, we had three more late additions: two in the same 24-hour period just prior to the Dinner date and one (probably a record, never to be equalled or beaten – we hope!) at ten past five in the afternoon, on the day of the Dinner itself! A total of 61 Setters were there; once again, a near-record: **Aldhelm, Aramis, Arepo, Artix** (also **Rasputin/3**), **Atlas, Ben Trovato, Brock, Bufo, Caper, Chalicea** (also **Rasputin/3**), **Charybdis** (also **Harpy/2**), **Cubic, Derek, Dilwitch** (also **Dragon/2**), **Dragon/2, 'Eck, Elap, Enigmatist, eXternal, Ferret, Garth, Hamamelis, Henry, Homer, Hypnos, Ifor, Ilver** (also **Rasputin/3**), **Jago, Kea, Lato, Leo, Mespot, Mohawk, Nibor, Nod, Noggs, Oyler, Pabulum, Pilcrow, Plinth, Ploy** (also **Harpy/2**), **Politicester, Quinapalus, Raich, Salamanca, Shackleton, Shark, Simian, Spud, Stick Insect, Tea Leaves, Theod, Third Man, Tiburon, Towser, Trev, Tut, Verbascum, Wan, Xanthippe** and **Zag**.

After the toast to absent friends – apologies having been received from **Ascot, Augeas, Brimstone, Brym, Centigram, Colleague, Dimitry, Elint, Franc, Hedgehog, Hedge-sparrow, Hotspur, KevGar, Kruger, Macbu, Nudd, Ottorino, Poat** and **Sabre**, plus mention of the recent death of Sir Jeremy Morse – **Jago** introduced the winner of the Solver Silver Salver: Richard England (aka **Third Man**). In his speech, Richard said that he had followed recent tradition and consulted the growing list of 29 All-Corrects to get their views. After the scoring had been verified, the top 3 actually coincided with his own personal preferences. (It was later commented that Richard has figured in the Top Solvers list in each of the past 40 years.) The winner of the Ascot Gold Cup for Best Puzzle was judged to be *Mixed Doubles* by **Shackleton**.

**Shackleton** commented that the Setters needed the Solvers to appreciate their efforts, which led very neatly on to the winner of the Radix Auditorum Claret Jug for Best New Solver, which was won by Colin Thomas. Colin said that he had fallen at the second puzzle of the year, but happily, he still carried on submitting entries. (It was later commented – using John Green's comprehensive database – that Colin had actually successfully solved 48 out of the 52 puzzles!) After that, **Jago** mentioned that David Parfitt, *The Times* Puzzles Editor (aka **Plinth**) was present as our guest, and how grateful we all were to *The Times* for taking The Listener Crossword into its pages – an astonishing 25 years ago this month! The final presentation was for the Bronze Casket – the prize for the Table Quiz – won by Table 3, *oddly* the quizmaster John Henderson's (aka **Enigmatist**) table. The answers were read out by John's wife, Jane Teather, who judged the winner of the tie-break: a "DLM" clue: which contained the letters of the Quiz's dedicatee, the late Sir Jeremy Morse. Paul Taylor & Katie Steckles of Table 3 took on the awesome responsibility of returning next year with the Bronze Casket refilled with sweets. (Incidentally, there was nearly a mix-up with the seating, since we discovered that we had *another* Paul Taylor in our midst – the latter being **Towser**, attending his first ever Listener Dinner, but no relation to the *other* Paul Taylor.)

**Jago** then declared the formalities at an end and John Henderson kindly proposed a vote of thanks to Jim Coulson (aka **Jago**) and Jan Antonovics for organising yet another successful Dinner in a most agreeable venue. After that, general mingling and chatting took place for a few hours, with the last handful of Setters and Solvers finally getting out of the bar at 4.00am.

Jim Coulson – 14<sup>th</sup> March 2016