

# The Times Listener Crossword Setters' Dinner — 2020

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The 2020 Dinner was held in the Wordsworth Suite, Ettington Chase, near Stratford-upon-Avon, on Saturday 14 March.

106 people attended, including the following 50 setters: Apt, Arepo, Artix, Ben Trovato, Brock, Bundle, Cagey, Charon, Charybdis, Colleague, Cubic, Derek, Dragon/2, 'Eck, Elap, Elgin, Elint, Emu, Enigmatist, eXternal, Ferret, Hedge-sparrow, Hellebore (Danda), Henry, Homer, Ifor, Jago, Kea, Kruger, Mash, Mohawk, Nod, Oyler, Pabulum, Pilcrow, Ploy, Rebel, Shackleton, Shark, Shenanigans, Skylark, Smudge, Stick Insect, Third Man, Tiburon, tnap, Trev, Twin, Verbascum, Xanthippe.

Jane Teather and John Henderson were in their second year as organisers. John welcomed the guests before handing over to Jane, who read out apologies for absence from setters, followed by two obituaries, before John read out an additional obituary and proposed a toast to "Absent Friends" at the start of the dinner.

## Apologies for absence

Aedites, Aragon, Augeas, Awinger, Brimstone, Chalicea, Duck, Encota, Franc, Goujeers, Hedgehog, Ilver, JFD, Lato, Leo, Little Hare, Nibor, Ottorino, Ozzie, Phi, Phobis, Poat, Raich, Sabre, Somniloquist, The Don, Tut, Virgilius, Vismut.

## Obituaries

Waterloo (David Gribble), Machiavelli (Joyce Cansfield), Schadenfreude (John Harrington).

## The Quiz

The quiz was set by John Henderson (Enigmatist) and formatted by Jane Teather. The first part was on the tables from the start, and Jane read out a further microphone round before dessert.

Five tables submitted all-correct answers to the quiz. Of these, Jane adjudged the best tie-breaker clue (a cryptic clue to the Shakespearean character whose ears were deaf to the warnings revealed by the answers) to have come from table 5. Table 5 duly received the Bronze Casket at the end of the prizegiving.

## The Prizegiving

Shane Shabankareh (Tiburon) announced the winner of the Radix Auditorum claret jug — Jon Lewis, who first entered with #4557 and has submitted 25 of the last 30 puzzles, with 20 correct.

Currently top of the consecutive All-Correct rankings, on 319, is Neil Talbott (Elint); he's followed by Richard Foden (Artix) on 190, Julian West (Arepo) on 165, Peter Blayney on 157 and Nigel Gavin on 152. The Solver Silver Salver passed from Richard Foden to Julian West, who gave a review of the year's puzzles in the style of Oscar awards, before announcing the finalists for the Ascot Gold Cup for Best Puzzle.

The shortlisted puzzles, based on recommendations from all of the all-correct solvers, were: From Where I'm Standing by Emu, G by Xanthippe, Folio by Nebuchadnezzar, Bright Spark by Shark, Well-spoken by Miles, Striving by Twin and Transformers by Yorick. Julian whittled these down to Well-spoken and Folio, and then re-solved both of them, finally awarding the prize to Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar wasn't present, so Julian accepted the Ascot Gold Cup on his behalf.

After presentation of the Bronze Casket, 'formal' proceedings ended with an indication that the 2021 Dinner will probably be held somewhere in Scotland, and guests adjourned to the Bar.