

The Listener Crossword Setters' Dinner 28th October 1989 : Harrogate

At 6.50 or thereabouts, the setters and their guests began to arrive in the bar on the 5th floor in the Empire Suite of the Imperial Hotel.

By 7.45, all but one had arrived, and 63 people went in to Dinner for the 1989 thrash.

The grace was given by **Ploutos** – the shortest speech he's made in a long time – and then the company sat down to such delights as “Purged Californian Goat Ricket” and “Giant Pink Dodo in Wig” or “Stewed, Peeled Impala”. (Full menu available from **Jago** on request.)

After an excellent dinner, in traditional Yorkshire style, the formal proceedings began.

Jago promised to be brief, and opened the batting with some observations about words and their odd sounds and meanings. For example, are allegations made by alligators, and does an abbot live in an abattoir? He then read out a few quotes from setters who could not be present, and proposed the toast “to absent friends”.

The next speaker was **Hamamelis**, who made some trenchant observations about setting, setters' fees and repetitive themes in Listener puzzles. She went on to propose the toast to The Solvers.

Following this, **Jago** gave a run-down of the situation regarding the solvers who had all puzzles correct for 1988-89. With three months to go, there were 9 still in the running. With two weeks to go, there were still 5, and finally 4 after all puzzles were in. An ultimate winner was chosen by counting back into last year, to see who had the longest all-correct record.

The winner therefore, of the Listener Solver Silver Salver was Philip Bailey, from Orpington. Sadly, he could not be present, since he was also taking part in a bridge final in Eastbourne the same night.

Jago read out Philip's comments about his favourite puzzles of the year, and announced his choice of the winner of the Ascot Gold Cup for the successful solver's favourite puzzle. This was awarded to **Law** for “A three pipe problem”. Happily, **Law** was present to receive it.

The next speaker was Elizabeth North, the novelist, and winner of the 1987 Sony Award for her dramatisation of Jude the Obscure. She called her talk “The Large Fish (7)”, which she explained was a Yorkshire clue, meaning “Special”. Her entertaining talk revolved around addiction to Listener Crossword solving and finding excuses not to write, whilst being preoccupied with the King of Bohemia's Dong (or something like that). She proposed the toast to THE LISTENER.

The toast was ably responded to by Peter Fiddick, the editor of THE LISTENER. He mentioned problems with the Post Office and encouraged the sending of faxed solutions to save delays. The message about greater remuneration was heard, if not instantly heeded.

Finally, **Jago** gave thanks to various people for their help, and reminded assembled setters and guests that the 1990 Dinner would be in Cardiff, organised by **Gos**.

The formal proceedings terminated at about 10.30, and then the serious talking and imbibing carried on until 3.45 am (real time – the clocks having gone back in the early hours). When **Jago** left at 3.40 or so, a few, such as **Dimitry** and **Bufo**, were still awake and talking.