

The Listener Crossword Setters' Dinner 17th March 2001 : Oxford

This year's dinner was held in the dining hall of St Catherine's College, Oxford on Saturday, March 17th. It was a joint affair comprising not only the Listener dinner but also a celebration marking the publication of Azed No. 1500 in the Observer. This resulted in an attendance of around 170, approximately half of which were Listener people.

It was very unfortunate that the chief organiser of the event, Michael Macdonald-Cooper, had been unable to travel down from Kirriemuir. His wife Celia had been involved in an accident earlier in the week and had suffered a few broken bones. We send her our best wishes for a speedy recovery. In Michael's absence, Don Manley stepped in as MC.

Listener setters present were: **Aedites, Alban, Aragon, Arcturus, Ark, Ascot, Auctor, Bandmaster, Bogtrotter, Brym, Buff, Bufo, Bundle, Caper, Charybdis, Columba, D G Tallis, Derek, Dimitry, Duck, Elefa, Elgin, Esrom, Fabrizzio, Fawley, Gioconda, Gong, Gos, Hellebore, Kea, Lato, Loda, Macbu (2 persons), Machiavelli, Merlin, Monk, Mordred, MynoT, Obiter, Owzat, Pabulum, Phalarope, Phi, Pilcrow, Plausus, Ploutos, Politicaster, Radix, Rebel, Samson, Tea Leaves, Third Man, Tiger, Trev, Verbascum, and Viking.** Apologies had been received from: **Blank, Calmac, Centigram, Goujeers, Jago, Leo, Mass, and Noggs.**

After pre-dinner drinks in the JCR the company sat down and enjoyed the meal and wine before the official business commenced. Paul Henderson introduced the Listener part of the proceedings by announcing the winner of the Solver Silver Salver. There had been five all-correct solvers in 2000: David McNeill, Derek Arthur, Steve Rice, Richard England and Nick Price. Under the countback system David McNeill would have been entitled to retain the trophy with his amazing run of 218 consecutive correct puzzles – he has since beaten Ross Beresford's all-time record of 224 puzzles. However, both David and second-placed Derek Arthur followed the tradition whereby previous winners decline to accept the trophy for a second time. Therefore the Salver was awarded to Steve Rice, a first time all-correct. The presentation was made by last year's winners, the Butlers.

Steve had conducted a ballot of the five all-correct solvers in order to ascertain the winner of the Ascot Gold Cup, which is awarded to the setter of the puzzle judged the best of the year. There was little disagreement with the choice of winner which was the puzzle that appeared on April 1st, Playfair by **Dolos**. (PLAYFAIR/DOLOS is an anagram of APRIL FOOLS DAY.) This puzzle was actually composed by **Kea** and he stepped forward to receive the trophy.

The Azed part of the proceedings then followed after which the informal chatting started and this was still going strong well after midnight.

Bufo's bluff has finally been called and it looks as if he will be organising next year's dinner which he says will be Derby-ish.