

The Listener Crossword Setters' Dinner 1984 : London

The formal surroundings of the Café Royal contrasted with the warm and friendly atmosphere generated by the forty-two assembled diners, most of them setters and solvers who were augmented by a few other intrepid spirits plainly enjoying the proceedings. Two young ladies from THE LISTENER, whose late arrival appeared to cause **Jude**, our able organiser, a certain amount of indigestion, brought official representation and, more importantly, a free drink from their editor who could not be present. They missed the melon and the soup but were able to enjoy the lamb and the rest of the meal.

After the meal toasts were drunk to THE LISTENER and to absent friends, the most notable of whom was Jim Evans, our erstwhile checker. Official business would, in any case, have prevented his coming but in the event he was kept away by a viral infection. His speech, which was read by **Jude**, contained some of the longer words from Chambers and required great attention at that stage of the evening but we were able to enjoy the versification which included (more or less) all the setters' pseudonyms (even all **Salamanca**'s). Many messages of goodwill came from absent friends, **Swan**'s having travelled the greatest distance (from Australia); on this occasion **Swan**'s message was not expressed in the form of an indirect anagram.

Phi gave us an amusing selection from his extensive reading, almost convincing us that he is a walking dictionary and introducing us to the mysterious KWOK'S 5DISEASE, surely a misprint in Chambers 1983.

Plutos, who promises (threatens?) to be back, gave us clearly and precisely his sincerely held views elucidating the criteria which will be applied in the checking of future crosswords:

- ? new ideas that are well thought out and executed will have most chance of being published:
- ? repetition of good ideas is not ruled out but the interval is likely to be two or three years:
- ? diagrams should normally be symmetrical (idleness not being an excuse for departure therefrom) although unusual shapes will be considered and even looked on favourably:
- ? clues should provide two ways of getting to the answer (this is normally by a definition and a cryptic indication):
- ? some flexibility is to be exercised with regard to clueing so that, say, 'Die of cold (3,4)', answer ICE CUBE, would not necessarily be ruled out:
- ? indirect anagrams are not ruled out but should be used very sparingly.

After this helpful and informative, but necessarily serious, speech some light relief followed from **Bart**. His anecdotes put us in the mood for the final informal session in the bar, but not before he had given us information about the Marlborough summer school where he raises solvers from Daily Telegraph to Listener/Azed standard.

The final session gave ample opportunity for meeting people to talk about anything and everything but mainly crosswords, or if that was not enough, drinking. What a lot you find out. Did you know that the first two across answers in the Daily Telegraph Quick Crossword form a pun? Today's example is SUCCOUR, SUITE – SUCK A SWEET! Come next year and you will find out much more.

Corylus is, relatively speaking, a new boy: he hadn't been to a Listener setters' dinner before but you won't keep him away in future. Next year he will look forward to helping to welcome you to his home territory. Do come.

(Corylus)