

The Listener Crossword Setters' Dinner 16th March 1996 : Leeds

76 people sat down to the Listener Setters' Dinner this year of whom 46 were setters, the remainder being either solvers of various levels of competency – there were 4 all-corrects last year, all present, one doubling as a setter – or supporters. Of the 46 setters 23 had had a puzzle published during 1995, and most were of the “extant” variety.

Free drinks before dinner got the evening off to a good start, and the company sat down to a (fairly) prompt start for the 4-course meal just after 7.00pm – does coffee and mints count as an extra course? A choice of starters, soup, sirloin of beef and a choice of sweets was thoroughly enjoyed by the assembled company if the clean plates were anything to go by.

Chairman for the evening was **Pabulum**, who brought the meeting to order with the formal toast to The Queen, and introduced **Ploutos**, who had been responsible for the organisation, as the main speaker, giving the toast to The Listener and its solvers – apparently **Ploutos'** organisation had fallen foul of broadcasting schedules, in that two previous editors of THE LISTENER, Derwent May and Alan Coren both found themselves with more important engagements too late for them to fulfil their undertaking for the evening.

Ploutos kept this speech fairly short, giving thanks to all the setters in general, quite apart from those present. In particular, he referred to the recent passing of three setters: **Klick**, **Cuth** and **Essem**, whose last puzzle had been published “this very day”, as a form of *In Memoriam*. He then gave thanks to the solvers, with a special mention for the all-corrects, Henry Blanco White (now a setter also), Glyn Hinde, Piers Ruff and Derek Arthur; and finally to the supporters whose tolerance allows us to continue in this hobby of ours.

At which point **Ploutos** became rather serious, having detected in his period as editor a somewhat disturbing trend. It was **Ploutos** himself who had started the statistics with No. 2397, and John Green had taken over some 10 years ago. In latter years it had been noticeable that some solvers had become more and more serious about what is after all just a hobby. In **Ploutos'** words: “The setters are not perfect – occasionally a fanciful alternative interpretation may be derivable from the preamble or odd clues. The editors are not perfect – sometimes they overlook such interpretations, which are allowed to persist to publication. But, once the checker, usually after consultation with the setter and editors, has made a decision, it is FINAL. Solvers are asked to accept this with good grace”.

The formal presentation of the Solver Silver Salver was made to Glyn Hinde, Henry Blanco White having declined to accept it for a second time, and Glyn replied to the toast on behalf of the solvers. He related how his involvement was of relatively recent inception, having been introduced to the puzzle by **Ploutos** himself at one of the Times Crossword championships. He had amazed himself by completing every puzzle for the last year correctly, and was happy to accept responsibility for presenting the Ascot Gold Cup for the best puzzle of the year on his own account, making it clear that his fellow all-corrects were not to be held responsible for his choice. Three puzzles received honourable mentions: Whodunnit (**Monk**), Treasure Hunt (**Hellphire**) and Thirty Six (**Law**); the runner-up was Use a Pencil (**Ploutos**) and the winner Hangover by **Plausus**.

Puzzles had been prepared for the assembled company by **Le Gallois**, **Bagpuss** and **Radix** the last of which had a £20 prize riding on it from the setter (won by **Third Man**, previously **Aeschylus**). The meeting now dissolved into its less formal stage, and your reporter is reliably informed that it went on to about 4.00am – he himself having been poured into bed at an earlier time!