

QUEEN ELIZABETH 2017

The 65th Queen Elizabeth Coronation Schools Tournament (QET) started on Saturday 23rd September in breezy but dry conditions. The course was in particularly good condition, with numerous positive compliments made to Chris Yeaman and his team. Apart from the general presentation of the course, the Greens came in for special mention. The Tournament Dinner was held on the Saturday evening, with an excellent attendance from a very appreciative audience. Regrettably our Captain, Neil Pirie, was unable to attend, but in support of my deputy, Douglas Morgan, Derek Reilly was on hand to assist.

A tribute was made to the departure of Barrie Douglas of Perth Academy, who sadly passed away earlier in the year. Barrie was a stalwart member of the Perth Academy team since leaving school and was committed to Scottish Golf. Sadly, while he was acting as Scottish Golf's European Boys' Captain at the Team Championship in La Manga, Barrie took ill and died a short time later from lung infections.

Last year, special mention and a warm welcome was made to The Old Wykehamists (Winchester), who were making their debut in the Tournament, but they have failed to get past Paisley Grammar and now Crieff High School. Regrettably both Cranleigh and Eton from south of the border were absent this year.

The committee are in discussion with several schools, either interested in making an entry or returning to the event that they once graced, but the Tournament could still do with a few more teams, as more and more schools are finding it harder and harder to raise a side.

In the Top Half of the draw, the team to beat were last year's winners, Stewarts Melville and not even Morrisons, Loretto or Watsons could prevent Stewarts Melville from progressing to the final again.

In the Bottom Half, the winning streak of Glenalmond (the writer's team!) was a joy to behold. In reaching their first semi-final since 1965, they saw off the advances of Dollar, Fettes and Crieff, before meeting last year's finalists, George Heriots in the semi-final. Heriots had seen off Edinburgh Academy and Perth Academy (winners against Charterhouse), to set up the eagerly awaited tie with Glenalmond, who had to re-schedule everything to be present on the Monday. Despite halving the top match, the more experienced team of George Heriots ran out winners in the other two matches by a small margin. Thus the same all Edinburgh Final as in 2016 was again set.

THE FINAL

So, a sense of Deja-vu was upon us, with Stewarts Melville (or is it ESMS!) trying to add to their previous 7 wins and make it three years in a row against George Heriots, who wanted to add to their previous 3 victories.

The top game went to Stewarts Melville by 2/1, but Heriots were comfortable winners of the second game, winning by 6/5, leaving the overall result resting on the final game, which went all the way to the eighteenth, with Stewarts Melville squeezing out their local rivals by 1 hole.

The quality of The Tournament is such that it is no surprise that, after an early start on Saturday morning, the Trophy was decided by the last match on the course at the last hole. Congratulations go to Stewarts Melville on their 8th victory, now only 3 victories behind the joint record holders, Glasgow High School and Watsons.

At the Prize Giving, The Forgan Quaich was presented to George Heriots and the winning Trophy to Stewarts Melville. Their Captain, Kevin Cattenach (Bruntsfield) paid thanks to the Society for, yet again, putting on another excellent tournament, much enjoyed by all. Special mention and thanks was particularly given to the Green keeping staff for presenting the course in such excellent condition and to all the backroom team for their welcoming contributions and attentions.

My particular thanks go to Douglas Morgan, who conducted all the starting and photographic duties throughout the weekend and my gratitude and thanks also go to my other assistants of Derek Reilly, John Mitchell, Robin Paterson (Snr), Richard Allison, Lawrie Hall and the ever present Andrew Forgan. Mark Russell and his team deserve special mention in providing excellent clubhouse facilities, with many compliments coming from all the competitors.

A R (Sandy) Gray (Tournament Secretary).