

QUEEN ELIZABETH 2018

The 66th Queen Elizabeth Coronation Schools Tournament (QET) started on Saturday 22nd September in bright, dry, and warm conditions. The course was in excellent condition, with players extending their enthusiastic appreciation to the work put in by Chris Yeaman and his team. It is fair to say that the course was in magnificent condition, with the quality and trueness of the greens coming in for praise. The Tournament Dinner was held on the Saturday evening, with an excellent attendance from Charterhouse, Uppingham, Winchester, Cranleigh, Oundle St. Bee's Fettes, Royal High School and Glenalmond. Our Captain, Neil Pirie was in attendance and in support were Alec Pinkerton and Tom Foggo.

A warm welcome was given to the returning sides of Sedbergh (after many years) and Winchester, who had won the Halford Hewitt in April. Only one side in the history of the QE has achieved the double in 1974, Charterhouse, with some of the players in that team present at this year's tournament. Sadly, teams from Madras and Kelvinside could not muster a side, leaving the draw two short of an even 32. Winchester were delighted to get through one round for the first time, but Glasgow High School put paid to the double!

The committee are in discussion with several schools, either interested in making an entry or returning to the event that they once graced, as the Tournament could still do with a few more teams, but it is evident that increasingly 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, who on their way to the semi-final saw off Watsons at the second extra hole. A refreshed side from Robert Gordons joined them in the semi-final, after beating Fettes, Charterhouse, and Glasgow Academy.

In the Bottom Half, last year's semi-finalists (Glenalmond) came unstuck in the second round against Uppingham, who were on form to also beat Royal High School and Perth Academy to gain a semi-final place against Glasgow High School. GHS had, themselves, moved seamlessly through to the semi-final clash with the team from south of the border.

Semi Final

Having watched much of the play, it was no surprise that the teams from Stewarts Melville, Robert Gordons, Uppingham and Glasgow High School had made it through. It is a credit to the status of the tournament that teams from all parts of the country are taking part and enjoying good runs in the event over the weekend.

In the first semi-final, Stewarts Melville were consistent enough to squeeze past the team from Aberdeen by a small margin, with all 3 games going to the 17th. The tie of the tournament belonged to Uppingham versus Glasgow High School. Uppingham won the top game by 1 hole and GHS won the second game by 1 hole, leaving the third game to decide the match. After GHS getting an incredible half at the 17th from the practice ground, the last was also halved in birdie 3's. So, on to extra holes, with Uppingham escaping with halves at the first and the third before sealing the victory with two excellent shots to the heart of the 4th (22nd) green for a winning 4.

THE FINAL

Stewarts Melville had won early and could enjoy a leisurely lunch, with Uppingham left with little time for lunch, as they had planes and trains to catch later in the day. Whilst the weather was still warm and dry, the wind had “got up” over the interval, making it much more testing for the finalists. It is fair to say that Uppingham had made the most of the weekend off the course as well and, after a short turnaround, basically ran out of steam against the ever steady Stewarts Melville.

SM won the first and third games by 4/3, with the middle game recording an honourable half.

Congratulations go to Stewarts Melville on winning their 4th title in a row and their 5th in the last 6 years – clearly to team to beat. This puts them only two behind the joint record holders of Glasgow High School and Watsons.

At the Prize Giving, The Forgan Quaich was presented to the Old Uppinghamians 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 thanks go to Tom Foggo, Alec Pinkerton (our official starter and photographer), Lawrie Hall, David Paterson, John Mitchell and Jim Gray for all their contributions and help to a successful weekend. The ever present Andrew Forgan also made an appearance to meet and greet old friends. Mark Russell and his team deserve special mention in providing excellent clubhouse facilities, with many many compliments coming from all the competitors and the diners on the Saturday night.

A R (Sandy) Gray (Tournament Secretary).