

QUEEN ELIZABETH 2016

The 64th Queen Elizabeth Coronation Schools Tournament (QET) started on Saturday 24th September in breezy but dry conditions. The course was in particularly good condition, with many compliments flying in the direction of Chris Yeaman and his team. Apart from the general presentation of the course, the Greens came in for special mention, being as quick and true as I have seen them. The Tournament Dinner was held on the Saturday evening, with an excellent attendance of over 70 Diners, including our Captain, John Fraser, and our Deputy Captain, Neil Pirie. Thank you to them for their support.

A small tribute was made to the departure of Ian Taylor of Breadalbane, who sadly passed away earlier in the year. Ian was a member of The Burgess and a great supporter of the QE.

Special mention and a warm welcome was made to The Old Wykehamists (Winchester), who were making their debut in the Tournament – long may they continue to take part. As one of the original teams in the Halford Hewitt back in 1924, one of Winchester's declared objectives was to improve their record against Scottish Schools, only having won 8 out of 19 matches, but now it stands at 8 out of 20!, having lost their first round debut tie to Old Grammarians (Paisley).

There was an improved entry this year, 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. None of St. Aloysius, Uppingham, Perth Academy or Crieff High School could manage and Stewarts Melville found themselves in a semi-final tie against Madras College, winners in 2009, who had progressed against Hutcheson's Grammar, Glasgow High and Eton. In the semi-final, two of the matches were won early by both sides, with the deciding match going to Stewarts Melville at the 18th.

In the Bottom Half, a rejuvenated side from Dollar progressed well against Oundle, Breadalbane and Kelvinside (after extra holes), before meeting another team of past winners in 2008, George Heriots. Heriots had seen off their local rivals, Watsons, in the second round and another Edinburgh School, Loretto, to gain a semi-final place against Dollar. Despite comfortably winning the opening game, Dollar's second and third couples found the strength of Heriots too much, leaving an all Edinburgh final.

THE FINAL

So, Stewarts Melville (or is it ESMS!) were trying to add to their previous 6 wins against George Heriots, who wanted to add to their previous 3 victories. The weather deteriorated slightly, with the wind freshening and light showers evident. The top game went to Stewarts's Melville early, but the bottom two matches could not have been closer. In the end Heriots had a putt to take the second match to extra holes and, in the third game, Stewarts Melville holed a testing putt at the 17th for a half and a victory. So, suddenly, Stewarts Melville had hung on and squeezed past Heriots by 2 matches to one, in a fitting climax to the Tournament, all hinging on the last few strokes.

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 matches on the course in the dusk on Monday evening.

Congratulations go to Stewarts Melville on their 7th victory, now only 4 victories behind the joint record holders, Glasgow High School and Watsons.

At the Prize Giving, our Captain, John Fraser, presented The Forgan Quaich 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 of the starting and photographic duties throughout the weekend and my gratitude and thanks also go to Neil Pirie, Tom Foggo, Jim Gray and Richard Allison, who all assisted over the weekend, all leading to a smooth running of this historic championship. Mark Russell and his team deserve special mention in providing excellent clubhouse facilities, with many compliments coming from all the competitors, one even running back in to the kitchen to express particular thanks to the staff behind the scenes.

A R (Sandy) Gray (Tournament Secretary).