



AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2021

HALFORD HEWITT VICTORY SPECIAL





It's been a long wait. 94 years since Loretto was the first Scottish school to participate in the Halford Hewitt in 1927 (the competition had started three years earlier in 1924, moving permanently to Deal the following year) and 48 years since their last and only appearance in the final, Loretto won the Halford Hewitt Cup at Deal at around 5.50pm on Sunday 12th September when Captain, Adam Wraight, holed out to secure victory over Sherborne in the final.



Adam holes the winning putt on 17

Loretto's early participation in the tournament was not, it has to be said, that successful and it was not until 1949 that we won our first Hewitt match! Indeed, we didn't manage to field a team during much of the 1930s when the tournament started expanding and we were joined by Watson's, Fettes and then Edinburgh Academy. In the early days, the tournament was dominated by a few schools; 24 of the first 25 tournaments were won by Eton, Harrow, Rugby or Charterhouse with a solitary victory for Marlborough in 1938.



First real success came in 1951, by which time 55 schools were competing, when Loretto reached the semi-finals claiming the impressive scalps of Malvern, Radley, Westminster and Repton on the way. Another semi-final was reached in 1957 when they were defeated by Watson's who went on to be the first Scottish school to win the tournament. A further semi-final was reached in 1971 (no need to mention that Fettes and Merchiston both claimed their first victories in 1964 and 1970 respectively!) but by this stage we were beginning to compete strongly and in 1973, Loretto comfortably defeated Merchant Taylors' in the semi-final to set up a clash with Rossall in the final. This match has achieved legendary status – it was even mentioned by the current President of the Halford Hewitt in this year's prizegiving.

There are others who witnessed what really happened but certainly it was a nail-biter with Loretto ahead in all matches at the turn but Rossall fighting back and four of the five matches going up 18 with Loretto having already secured one win, 4/3. Whether it was adrenaline or a strengthening of the wind, I'm not sure, but apparently a number of Loretto drives ended up in the ditch which runs across the 18th fairway. While Hamish Ritchie and Jonny Salvesen managed to secure a 1up win, two matches were lost on 18 leaving the match score 2-2. The outstanding match then went up the 19th and was sadly lost. Loretto had a very strong team in that era and reached four quarter-finals and two further semi-finals in the following ten years.



View over the 1st fairway from the clubhouse at Deal



This gives some context to this year's win. The standard of golf is getting stronger every year and so to win requires both talent and persistence as well as a strong team ethic. Wins over Highgate and Mill Hill (4-1 and 5-0 respectively) set up a revenge encounter with Ampleforth, one of the strongest teams in the tournament – they had reached the final on the past three occasions and had defeated Loretto in the semis in 2019.

This proved to be a classic Hewitt tussle and the pivotal match in many ways. The previous encounter in truth had been close and this was no different. Ampleforth definitely had the better of the front 9; after 9 holes we were down in three matches, ahead in one and all square in the other. After 12 we were still down in 3 but now ahead in two. It required Loretto to hang on to their leads and to turn one match around which is what happened. We were 2-1 down with two matches going down 18. Sami Bouzabia and John Dunn-Butler were all square and Henry Featherstone and Brodie Good 1up. Sami holed a tricky putt to win one up which then required Henry and Brodie to halve the last. Henry calmly putted dead for a par and Loretto was through.



The glorious links at Royal Cinque Ports, Deal



I think the confidence instilled by this gutsy win set the tone for the rest of the campaign. The match against Rugby was quite tight through the early holes but gradually Loretto took the initiative. I watched Adam hit to about 6 feet at the Par 3 8th with Joel holing for birdie to go 2up. A few moments later John Dunn-Butler hit the same shot to about two feet; again a Loretto birdie to go 2up. However, Rugby fought back and took two matches with the eventual result being a 3-2 win and a return to the semi-finals. The advantage this year was that being at the top of the draw, only one match was played on Saturday which allowed some well-deserved R&R that afternoon and evening. A few celebrations were held on the balcony followed by a chipping competition and then watching Emma Radacanu do her brilliant stuff that evening.



The team celebrates the victory over Ampleforth on the clubhouse balcony on Saturday

The weather for the semi-finals and finals on Sunday was spectacular – warm sunshine and very little breeze. I watched all five groups play the 1st hole against Cheltenham, and while I dared not think it, I quickly came to the conclusion that this could be Loretto's year. The pin at the first was placed in a very tough spot at the front right of the green just over the stream. The safe shot to the middle of the green would probably roll to the back leaving an



almost certain 3 putt. Loretto won this hole in every match scoring 4 solid Pars and one birdie; Cheltenham had five bogeys. The confidence displayed in the way each pair played the hole was clear to see. I then watched Henry and Brodie play the second after their birdie at 1. Henry drove into the bunker and Brodie had to pitch out. Henry hit the third to about 15 feet. Cheltenham got their solid Par and looked confident only for Brodie to nail the 15 footer for Par and a half.

I can't confirm this but I don't think Loretto were ever behind in any match and the final score was a decisive 5-0, leaving plenty time for a relaxing lunch watching the denouement of the second semi-final between Sherborne and Rossall. Some liked the prospect of facing Rossall in the final in order to exact revenge for 1973; others felt it was a bad omen. The match was very tight, 2-2, with the final match going down 18 all square. Both sides failed to get up and down from just off the green to halve it in 5 before having to go up the 19th. Unfortunately Rossall's drive came towards the many spectators outside the clubhouse, bounced in the semi-rough and trickled over the out-of-bounds about a foot onto the road. Game over- Sherborne were into only their second ever final (they lost to Malvern in 2006).



The final was a much tighter affair with holes being exchanged in all the matches. Loretto this time lost the 1st in two matches. Henry and Brodie led the way and after going down early made their move towards the turn winning three holes in a row, the third of these wins being an eagle two when Henry holed from about 120 yards! Sherborne were to keep fighting in this match and it required a 35 foot putt on 15 from Henry to halve the hole and stay 2up. A great pitch from Brodie won the 16th for a 3 and 2 victory. Meanwhile Abs Ruia and Cameron Blair had gone 4up early on but again Sherborn were to fight back winning 12



and with Loretto behind a bush on 13 it started to look a little tight. Abs then hit a miracle shot from behind the bush to stem the tide and they went onto win 4 and 3.



Sami Bouzabia drives off the wonderful beach tee at the 9th

I measured this drive at 370 yards!

At this stage Adam and Joel were just 1 up going down 17. It was getting tense. Sherborne had some trouble and with them taking four to get on the green it looked all over. They then holed from 15 feet to require Loretto to make Par. Joel kindly left the putt short for Captain Adam, to hole the winning putt which delivered the Halford Hewitt to Loretto.

The final score was 4.5-0.5 (a half was agreed in the unfinished match) and it was certainly tighter than the semi but Loretto were always the stronger side. I was fortunate to play a match against the Deal club the following week and the talk was of 'how good those Loretto boys were'. But as we know, foursomes requires more than just golfing talent and the team spirit which was evident from the beginning was a key factor. Congratulations to Adam Wraight and his team of Cameron Blair, Sami Bouzabia, John Dunn-Butler, Henry Featherstone, Brodie Good, James McCormick, Stu Mitchell, Abs Ruia, Timon Sitte and Joel Westwell. Thank you too to the various supporters from the OLGS who made it down over the four days including Torquil McInroy, Chris Henderson, Matt Sinclair and Jason Sitte.



We plan to celebrate this magnificent and historic achievement with a number of events over the coming months. We will be in touch to let you know about the plans. Meanwhile we look forward to the defence of the title which will begin on 7th April 2022.



Captain Adam Wraight with the Halford Hewitt Cup

OTHER NEWS

The Scratch team had little time to celebrate before teeing it up in Edinburgh the following Friday for the Queen Elizabeth Coronation Trophy. Sadly, tiredness took its toll and after a first round win over Strathallan, they lost to Glasgow Accies on the Saturday morning. The Stenhouse Quaich, postponed from March, takes place at the end of October at Elie.

In the South we have two matches remaining, one against the Old Marlburians at Liphook on 7th October and one against Fettes at Worplesdon on 24th October. Sadly, the Mackay Trophy has had to be postponed for a second year. Neither Fettes nor ourselves could provide sufficient numbers to make the day worthwhile for Denham. We will be reviewing with Fettes and the club the date and format of what used to be a very popular event.



In Scotland the match against Edinburgh Accies at Luffness New was a great success with a nice range of ages and golfing abilities including Hewitt team member Sami Bouzabia playing for Loretto as a warm-up for his heroics a couple of weeks later. The final result was a friendly 3-3 draw which means that Loretto retain the trophy! Our thanks to Christian Bruce for organising this increasingly popular fixture.

Finally, the OLGS Medal will be played for at The Renaissance Club on Saturday 16th October. While the date is a little earlier than usual, we are very fortunate to get access to this prestigious venue at an attractive rate. The competition will be followed by a meal and the AGM, papers for which accompany this newsletter.

The Committee will be happy to receive any nominations to the Committee from members which can be sent to Robert Rigg in advance of the meeting. I am delighted to say that I will be nominating Rosie Niven to join the Committee as our first lady Committee member. We are very keen to promote more interest and engagement in the activities of the Society by our lady members and Rosie's brief will be to find ways of doing this. Rosie was one the Academy's first golf scholars and currently works for the European Tour so we are very fortunate to have her involvement and we all look forward to working with her.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the forthcoming AGM or any of the matches in the South.

Andrew Brown

OLGS President



The deserted putting green at Deal on Sunday evening