

The Bernard Darwin Trophy 2021 Review



After the frustrations of a postponement and a cancellation in 2020, it was a relief and a delight to host the Darwin tournaments again in 2021. Despite heavy rainfall ahead of the events, Woking Golf Club presented the course in wonderful condition.

Harrow claims fourth Bernard Darwin Trophy win.

In the 62nd playing of the Trophy, the holders from 2019, Malvern, were knocked out in the first round by Marlborough. There were three clean sweeps (3-0) on the opening morning from Harrow, Uppingham and Tonbridge, all of whom looked ominously strong. At the bottom of the draw, Highgate beat a much-fancied Radley team, with the deciding match going down the 19th.

It is a long time since the teams have had the chance to enjoy a Day 1 Darwin lunch and the excellent white burgundy was in high demand. Winchester booked their place in the semi-final with a 2-1 win over old-rivals Eton. Uppingham versus Tonbridge produced a battle royal. Watson and Wigglesworth of Uppingham were in good form, beating Jones and Sims in the middle match. And Gotla and Moffat clinched it for Uppingham with a fine win against Spurling and Hubbard.

In the bottom half of the draw, Harrow defeated Charterhouse in a titanic battle, with Brewer and Tindall showing great leadership at top pair with a comfortable victory out in the country. There was a surprise at the bottom of the draw. Highgate, still looking for their first win in the Bernard Darwin Trophy, impressed with a 2-1 defeat of Marlborough.

After the bustle of the first day, the second day of the Darwin always feels serenely calm. On this occasion we were greeted by a misty dew and still trees - perfect conditions for golf. In the top half of the draw, the Winchester third pair was slow out of the blocks, so Gotla and Moffat got an early point on the board for Uppingham. Hawkings and Coulman won at second pair for Winchester, leaving the top match as the decider going down the 18th. With the pin in a devilishly tricky spot (back right, just a few yards from the pond), Bonsall and Hough of Winchester held their nerve to seal a tense victory over Freeman and Proffitt.

The bottom half of the draw saw a delicious local battle between the two H's: 'Ighgate and 'Arrow. It was nip and tuck all the way. In a match of real quality, Highgate put Harrow under enormous pressure in all three matches but just came up short, losing the top two matches on the 17th and 18th respectively.

So, we were set for a grand final between old rivals, Winchester and Harrow. Both schools had won the Bernard Darwin Trophy three times before, but Winchester had to go back to 1974 for their last victory. The Winchester team needed to make a change to the line-up, with the experienced Nyren Scott-Malden replacing Coulman at second pair. Winchester captain, Tom Hawkings, paired Scott-Malden with the long-hitting Bonsall, a decision that came good with a 3&2 victory over Jenkins and Gracey. At third pair, Fricker and Aubrey-Fletcher of Harrow were too strong for Fell and Hewetson, leaving the top match to decide the final.

The Harrow first pair, Brewer and Tindall, were two down after fourteen holes but rallied strongly to find themselves one up on the eighteenth tee against Hawkings and Hough of Winchester. Tindall drove into the heather down the right, whilst Hawkings smashed one down the middle. Hough played a delightful wedge, finding the bottom layer of the green for Winchester, whilst it was all Brewer could do to get the Harrow ball just short of the green. The chip from Tindall left Brewer with a fifteen-foot putt to take the match, but it slid by the hole to take the deciding game down the nineteenth.

After two days of excellent competitive golf played in great spirit, The Bernard Darwin Trophy was decided by the narrowest of margins. On the extra hole, both Winchester and Harrow found themselves over the back of the green in two. Hough had the tougher shot for Winchester and played a lovely chip, but it ran on to finish eight feet above the flag. Brewer for Harrow responded with a delightful chip stone dead, meaning Hawkings needed to sink the Winchester putt to go down the twentieth. Sadly for Winchester, his putt missed by the narrowest margin, glancing the hole as it slid by.

So, heartbreak for Winchester who fought a great campaign. But delight for Harrow who claimed their fourth win. Jamie Warman, the non-playing captain of the Harrow team, accepted the Trophy from David Wright, the Woking Golf Club President.

The day before, the first-round losers competed for the Bernard Darwin Goblet in the afternoon foursomes stableford. The Repton team won the prize, repeating the feat of two years' ago.



Tonbridge takes the Senior Darwin for fourth time.

Two weeks before The Bernard Darwin Trophy we had gathered for the Senior and Veteran events. We were treated to glorious weather at Woking and it was a joyous occasion. Again Day 1 provided its fair share of surprises. Neither of Highgate or Clifton have won the Senior Darwin event but both looked strong with victories over Marlborough and Eton respectively in the first round. Malvern squeezed past Winchester, and there were comfortable first round wins for Tonbridge and Radley.

In the afternoon of Day 1 Uppingham inflicted a surprisingly heavy defeat on Charterhouse, whilst the other three ties went down to the wire. The other match in the bottom half of the draw saw Clifton snatch a tense victory over Radley, with the pairing of Robey and Lepage sealing the win on the nineteenth hole. In the top half of the draw, Stockbridge and Rattansi of Malvern won the deciding rubber on the eighteenth against Olivere and Phillips of Highgate. Malvern would play Tonbridge in the semi-final, after Jonny Hubbard's team beat Harrow 2-1.

There was high drama on the morning of Day 2. Clifton and Uppingham secured one comfortable win each, leaving the top match to decide the tie. It could have gone either way in the first two extra holes, but it was down to Robey and Lepage of Clifton to emerge as heroes again with a strong showing on the twenty-first hole. By contrast, Tonbridge glided past Malvern in the top half of the draw, with the top two pairs delivering comfortable victories.

We were treated to an exciting final in the Senior Darwin. Clifton, who had been concerned before the tournament about getting a side together, were the underdogs. But

the top pair of Willcocks and JH Dyson claimed a tight win on the 18th. Hubbard and Monteuis of Tonbridge delivered their fourth straight win at second pair, leaving the final to be decided in the bottom match. Robey and Lapage, Clifton's heroes in earlier rounds, were squeezed out by Cooper and Basden-Smith of Tonbridge on the seventeenth, allowing the Kent school to claim it's fourth Senior Darwin since 2008.

Neil Birnie, the Woking Golf Club Captain, presented the trophy to Jonny Hubbard of Tonbridge. The Senior Darwin Plate competition, a foursomes stableford event, was won by Rugby.

Veteran golfing pleasures

Everyone who competes in any of the Bernard Darwin Trophy events revels in the camaraderie of the occasion and the competitive spirit of the games. There are so many old rivalries that, even as we 'mature', bragging rights are much sought after. And this is as evident in the Veteran event as it is for those youngsters competing in the other two competitions.



Occasionally, the events throw up interesting golfing feats. And this year, the Veteran event took that accolade. Those who know Woking golf course will recall how frustratingly tricky the first hole can be. It is a par four but only 267 yards off the yellow tee. In a more conventional way, the second hole is just tough: a par three, which plays all of its 201 yards, and a high tariff, sloping green with danger all around.

So, it was quite a considerable feat for the Malvern first pair in the Veteran competition, Thompson and Bevan-Jones, to record a two on both the first and second holes: an admirable performance at any age, but particularly notable when playing with a combined age of 158.

Thompson and Bevan-Jones would go on to win the Veteran Darwin salver, but only on a count-back over the Uppingham pair of Downes and Renison. We also run a 'nett' competition for the Veterans, which makes an age allowance for pairings with a combined age of more than 155. This fun event was won by the Uppingham pair of Cook and Auckland. Again, this was on a count-back: on this occasion beating the Wellington pair of Lovett and Campbell on the last six holes.

All in all, it was great to be back. Our thanks go to our friends at Woking Golf Club, who presented the course in terrific condition and provided wonderful hospitality.

The dates for the 2022 events will be June 14th/15th for the Senior Darwin, June 15th for the Veteran Darwin, and June 30th/July 1st for the Bernard Darwin Trophy. If pandemic conditions allow, we hope to re-introduce our small gathering at Woking Golf

Club on the first Monday of November (so Monday 1st this year) to discuss any matters arising from this year's events, conduct the draws for 2022, enjoy lunch and perhaps a few holes of golf. If you wish to represent your school at this gathering, please let a member of the Committee know.

Committee Members

Robert Miller – Secretary (Repton), John Gill (Charterhouse)
Robin Swann (Marlborough), Nigel Washbourn (The Leys)



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