

UK National Schools' Teams Championships

Played at Pontins, Brean Sands, Somerset, on 29-30 June, 2006

These Championships were organised by Tony Corfe, Peter Purland and their usual team of helpers; they were held in 3 age-groups, at Under-16, Under-14 and Under-12. Because of the distances involved RGS had had doubts about being able to participate, but Dr Goodship's kind offer to arrange transport (Easyjet to Bristol followed by minibus for rest of the way) made it possible for us to send a team in the Under-14 age-group.

We left school at lunchtime on the Wednesday only to find that the Easyjet flight was delayed and it was almost 7.00pm before we left Newcastle Airport. The rest of the travel went smoothly and we were settled into our chalets at Pontins by 9.00pm. Thursday was mainly chess. We started well - too well, perhaps, because this meant we had to play all the top four teams in the next five rounds. We suffered heavy defeats at the hands of Haberdashers Askes, Elstree, and Magdalen College School, Oxford, eventually first and second respectively. We finally finished 7th, which was really about what I had expected.

All the boys fought hard and I have no grumbles about their effort. There were some very long and difficult games. And some sterling resistance even when we were heavily outgunned. Captain, Tom Beckwith had a particularly tough time against some of the best boys of his age in the country. Chris Walker failed to win a game on the Wednesday but won a match-decider on the Thursday morning. Max Jones did well enough and also won a cash prize in the traditional Thursday evening Blitz tournament. Ross Mills scored 60% in his games on board 4. Chris Goodship blows hot and cold - sometimes good but sometimes awful! Best of all Andrew Douglas won the prize for the best score on board 6 in the under-14 section.

A last afternoon free at Brean Sands - an enjoyable walk along the beach for Dr Goodship and me - football for the boys supervised by Mr Douglas. A final meal and we were off back to the airport. This time all went easily and we were back at Newcastle to meet the parents well on time.. I found it an enjoyable three days. So, I think, did everybody else. I cannot express my gratitude enough to parents, Tim Goodship and Rob Douglas, without whose support this would not have been possible. We are invited to send a team (teams?) to Brean Sands again next year. We will have to consider the cost effectiveness of such a trip before we do it again.