

CHESS IN THE CASTLE 2009

Played at Aydon Castle, 23rd May

Unlike last year when we had been beset by cold winds, this year Aydon was at its most benign. Warm sunshine in the morning made it far pleasanter to be outside than in, but nonetheless some 30 young players from as far away as Leeds, Kendal and Penrith as well as the usual Carlisle and North-Eastern contingent entered to take part what has now become a regular annual event. As usual we were warmly welcomed by English Heritage in the person of custodian Brian Siddle. Gerry Beldon, Tim and Abi Adams, together with many parents helped control what proved to be a most enjoyable event. Dr Gupta offered to help and was promptly roped in to present the prizes at the end! Numbers in this event were down on last year, probably because it was Half-Term and a Bank Holiday weekend. Many potential entrants were away on school trips.

Zheming Zhang (Cragside, Gosforth) had been overwhelming favourite to win the U-9 section, but seemed strangely vulnerable. He had a very lucky win against Manav Gupta (RGS Newcastle) in an earlier round, and going into the final round with 6/6 was well trounced by Aidan Byrne (St Teresa's, Heaton). This led to a very close finish in which Zheming and Manav shared top place on 6/7; Aidan shared third place with Anthony Lai (RGS Newcastle) and Peter Owen (St Teresa's) all on 5/7. Alexa Fetherstonhaugh (Penrith) was the best girl in the competition.

The U-11 Section again produced a change of leader right at the end. Joshua Levine (all the way from Talbot Road Primary in Leeds!) beat my tournament favourite, Chris Wilson (RGS Newcastle) in an early round and strode on rapidly to 5/5. However his early start and the 2 hour road journey from Leeds took their toll; he tired and lost his final two games against back markers. This hard game was the only reverse Chris suffered all day and he took first place with 6/7. Joshua shared second place with Andrew Gatenby (Red Rose, Chester-le-Street) on 5/7. Jack Hughes (St Teresa's) was 4th on 4½.

For the second year in succession the only 100% score on the day came from West of the Pennines. Jason Maxwell (Trinity, Carlisle) won 6/6, the critical game coming in the first round of the tournament when he beat Ben Cull (RGS Newcastle) in an exciting endgame. Ben took second place with 5/6 and no fewer than six players shared third place! We almost ran out of Bronze Medals on this occasion! The six players were Zak Bonnington (Durham Johnston); Tom Cleminson (RGS); Thomas Glenwright (Whitley Bay); Connor McGurk (Kirkbie Kendal); Oliver Rice (Queen Elizabeth's, Hexham) and Christopher Royle (Trinity, Carlisle). Well done to all.

I've not given everybody's detailed results. My laptop crashed on me when I got home and I have not been able to retrieve them yet!

Paul Bielby