

SSAA Chairman's Report 2014

The untimely deaths of Allister Steele and Clive Thomas in recent weeks are a sad loss to athletics and cross-country in Somerset. Our thoughts go out to their families and friends.

The renaming of the Yeovil track enhances the late Bill Whistlecroft's legacy. The Bill Whistlecroft Arena will be a lasting reminder of Bill's extraordinary impact on athletics in the County (and beyond). It was very moving to witness Anne, his widow, awarding the new Bill Whistlecroft Trophy at the T&F Championships in June.

The trophies on display at the AGM, wonderful achievements though they represent, do not in themselves even begin to reflect the extraordinary work that goes into the running of SSAA. The excellent reports from Cross Country, T&F and Combined Events testify to the wonderful success of the athletes and the dedication and support of the team managers. Two quite exceptional people wrote these reports. Brian Baker and Richard Bowden are unequalled in the dedication, time and effort that they put into their numerous roles in the Association. Much of the success of our Association is down to their extraordinary commitment.

This year SSAA athletes have achieved International Representation in all three of our disciplines. Congratulations to Sophie Hamilton in XC, Archie Walton and Laurie Dawkins at T&F and to Cliff Schwabauer and Ellen Barber in combined Events. The fact that these athletes attend five different schools is testament to the inclusiveness of our sport throughout the County.

The SSAA website has been a wonderful success and is entirely attributable to the effort and imagination of Brian Baker. It has proved a great tool for communication, event entries, news etc. The number of hits recorded this year was 22066, with 1213 of those being from outside of the UK! Please visit www.somersetschoolsathletics.org.uk and be informed.

I would like to thank the increasing number of team managers for their professional care of our athletes, the Executive for its hard work behind the scenes, our Officials Rep, Pat Gillett, for making sure that our events are properly staffed with qualified officials, Nick and Sally Higman for their guidance and overseeing of our County Championships and all the teachers, coaches, officials and parents who encourage and support the athletes.

I thank all the schools that so generously host our many executive, planning and selection meetings.

Finally, I wish Garry Jennings (Chairman), supported by Jane Yandell (Vice-Chairman), all the best for next season.

Les Neville