

**SOMERSET SCHOOLS ATHLETIC
ASSOCIATION**



**Cross Country
Report & Results**





SOMERSET SCHOOLS ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

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2012 Cross-Country Report

It is incredibly difficult for me to write this year's report for I do not feel I have the vocabulary to express my feelings for the 2012 season and all that it contained!

It is said "a picture is worth a thousand words." Stored on my computer I have more the 2500 photographs of the entire Merryfield event from maps, marquee erection, mass starts, team encampments, presentations and car parking but above all happy, smiling faces of individual athletes, teams, parents, spectators and most importantly officials, marshals and helpers.

And more recently I have found extensive videos of each of the six races on the web:
<http://www.athleticos.org/coverage/248487-2012-Aviva-English-Schools-Cross-Country-Championships/>

The NAS Merryfield National Cross-Country Championships were without question the pinnacle of my achievements within the Association. None of this could have been achieved, however, if it were not for the valued support I had from colleagues and, during the few days leading up to the event and on the day itself, the vast number of 'friends' of the Association who through their efforts made it all so very successful.

However, this report as usual must start with the 'mundane' championships' reports which lead up to the national championships:

Junior Championships –

These again proved to be very popular with 14 schools taking part. This meant that in the under 13 events the number of finishers was greater than in some of the senior cross-country races! The afternoon saw dry weather but as the sun set so the temperature fell and the final race was certainly run in chilly conditions. However with refreshments for all at the end of races the young athletes would have taken good memories home of what is often their first taste of a county event.

Thanks, as always, must be extended to Richard Llewellyn-Eaton who set out his 'usual' course although new sporting installations meant slight alterations. Also, through Richard, his willing band of helpers, both staff and students, must be thanked for their time and efforts.

The champions were:

	Individual	Team
Under 13 Girls	Amelia Vance (Wellington Sch.)	Queens College
Under 13 Boys	Charlie Samouelle (Millfield Prep.)	Kingsmead
Under 14 Girls	Imogen Keeling (King's Hall)	King's Hall
Under 14 Boys	Dan Wilde (Queen's Coll.)	Queen's College

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County Championships –

The championships were again held at Millfield School, so that organisation could simply be ‘taken out of the box’ in the busy period leading up to the national organisation. Thanks must be expressed to Jason Allen for his organisation and the ever willing Millfield groundstaff team for their superb preparation of the course.

On the morning of the event a certain amount of facility installation has to take place. This was severely hampered by a howling wind which meant it was impossible to fully erect the finish/administration marquee! One side and the roof was all that could be battened down – needless to say cramped (but workable) conditions had to be overcome! Thankfully the rain did not materialise thus conditions for the competitors were chilly and difficult but not impossible.

With all athletes fully aware of the importance of the championships, leading into the south-west and the home “nationals”, competition was strong with one athlete in particular literally running herself into the ground!

The champions were:

	Individual	Team
Minor Boys	Bradley Seager (Yeovil – Huish Episcopi)	Yeovil
Junior Boys	Luke Prior (Sedgemoor – King Alfred’s)	Taunton
Inter Boys	Matthew Dickinson (Sedgemoor – King Alfred’s)	Mendip
Senior Boys	Blair Brown (Taunton – Queen’s)	Taunton
Minor Girls	Amelia Vance (Taunton – Wellington)	Mendip
Junior Girls	Lydia Lavallin (Yeovil – Huish Episcopi)	Mendip
Inter Girls	Amy Cooper (Mendip – Millfield)	Mendip
Senior Girls	Aoife Thorogood (Mendip – The Blue)	Mendip

South-West Championships –

Selection for these championships took place immediately after the county championships and was straightforward. Some athletes had indicated prior to the county championships that they would not be competing in one of the county or the south-west championships due to family commitments or training schedules leading up to the nations. (As with the previous year all the senior girls were given the chance to opt out of the championships.) Those selected were posted on the website as well as sent individual letters. The website installation to confirm availability was set up and that was just about the end of my involvement with the county team!

The south-west championships took place on fields behind Exeter Arena in atrocious wet and cold conditions which became dryer as the afternoon progressed. The Minor Girls’ team attire at the first presentation would not have been out of place in the foothills of Everest!

The champions were:

	Individual	Team
Minor Boys	Robert Howarth (Wiltshire)	Devon
Junior Boys	Sam Sommerville (Somerset)	Devon
Inter Boys	Alex Carter (Wiltshire)	Somerset
Senior Boys	Connoer Robinson (Cornwall)	Avon
Minor Girls	Amelia Vance (Somerset)	Somerset
Junior Girls	Victoria Weir (Devon)	Devon
Inter Girls	Loren Bleaken (Wiltshire)	Wiltshire
Senior Girls	Olivia Sadler (Avon)	Avon

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As a county we were a little disappointed by the junior boys result for our team was particularly strong on paper having reserve athletes who had done particularly well in schools cup competitions. However the cold and illness in the team meant that Devon just pipped us. The intermediate boys' was a good result whilst Amelia Vance, it will be noticed, is undefeated in these results.

National Championships –

Selection for these championships was difficult for we knew that our decisions would bring disappointment to many aspiring athletes. A strong team was selected and again once the details had been posted on the website I could concentrate on the organisation of the whole event.

The administration for the team was shouldered by Charlotte Fisher, whose report is below. On the day Charlotte was ably supported by nine other team managers. What other county could field this number of dedicated team managers along with many other members actually organising the event?

"It was a great honour to be asked to be the senior team manager in the year that Somerset hosted the National Championships and not without some pressure given the expert manner it has been run in previous years. The finely honed system that Brian has developed over the years for managing the 48 strong team really made the task very straightforward. With 10 team managers (including myself) bringing with them a mix of experience and enthusiasm to the 6 teams, the athletes were extremely well looked after. Thank you to all of the team managers (Richard Bowden, Julie Harrison, Paul Chadwick, Chris Wakeford, Jason Allen, Julie Harrison, Katie Cobb, Allister Steele & Larry Tulett) for their hard work and support on the day and I know from a number of post event emails from parents and athletes that this was, as always, greatly appreciated. Jane Yandell also provided us with a great deal of support and guidance in the build up to the event, which was greatly appreciated.

The team gathered early at The Blackbrook Tavern in Taunton for a breakfast team meeting. It was felt that being the home team it was important that we arrived at the venue en masse. Any previous fears we had about parents and athletes choosing to opt out of the breakfast meeting and making their way directly were soon allayed. Such was the level of support and enthusiasm for the home team that all 48 athletes were at the venue on time. We kitted out, had breakfast, team talk and photographs and made our way to the venue.

Arriving as a team proved to be absolutely the right thing to do and there was enormous pride and excitement as we approached the airfield. Having seen the venue in the early stages of planning and then to see it transformed by the enormous hard work of the Somerset Schools' working party was tremendous. It was made even more special that as a team we could walk straight into our pre-assembled prime position tented area. There was a definite 'hush' on the coach as we drove into the site.

The usual procedures of walking the course, submitting entries, etc. were straightforward and then it was onto the competitive part of the day.

The teams were thoroughly well prepared by the team managers, with well managed warm ups and timely arrivals at the start pens. Many athletes commented on what a difference it made in calming their pre-race nerves to see so many friendly and familiar faces from schools and clubs at the pen and marshalling areas, not to mention the huge home support as they ran round!

I think the results speak for themselves, but it was a fantastic end to the day to discover that Somerset had won the overall boys aggregate 'C group' county trophy very convincingly with a tally of 1625 over Bedfordshire's 2145, a score that would have placed

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Somerset 2nd in the B County competition behind Cheshire. Although not winners the Senior Girls team, which is so often the hardest age group to recruit also impressed especially so given it was made of three newcomers and a hesitant reserve, Kitty Bartlett (Millfield) who stepped up to the role with a performance worthy of an outright selection.

Amongst the leading performances by individuals Blair Brown (Queens) in his 6th year of competing for the SSAA Cross-Country team finished an appropriate 6th. Sam Sommerville (Stanchester) earned himself his first England vest by finishing a superb 8th place. And to have three intermediate boys, Joe Walton 15th (Castle), Matt Dickinson 16th (King Alfred's) and Oliver Fox 22nd (King's College) all in the top 25 was impressive.

There was just one negative aspect of the day and that was the fact that we worryingly had two athletes held in First Aid for some considerable time, with one being taken to hospital for further checks. Both athletes, Max Patch (Holyrood) and Lily Hawkins (Stanchester) had competed on many occasions before for both school and club and are considered by all as gutsy athletes. The general feeling was that the course was much tougher than it appeared and that the enormity of the occasion and the desire by these individuals to do their very best for the team meant that one or two over exerted themselves. Both Lily and Max were reported to later have gone down with colds and so clearly were running very hard with a virus. Both athletes and their parents were given a superb level of care and support by the team managers and both sets of parents sent lengthy emails thanking the SSAA for this.

The actions of one of the team's stalwarts, senior boy George Harris (Yeovil College) perhaps summed up the day. George was seen jumping over the fence to help the exhausted and fallen Max Patch to his feet and across the finishing line. I'm sure in somebody's rule book that wasn't allowed, but I think it demonstrated the Corinthian spirit of the team on the day and just how much it mattered to the individuals concerned to be part of the team on home turf on this special occasion."

Charlotte has listed the team managers who were recruited in addition to the usual four who were otherwise engaged in the event's overall organisation. The Association thanks them most sincerely for their efforts which certainly went a great way in making the day so memorable not only for the Association but also each and every individual athlete.

The following is the (reformatted) evaluation I sent to the ESAA immediately after the National Championships with a conclusion by Jane. It is part of an 80+ page document outlining the entire event and is included here as this is the only method by which it can be viewed by officers, officials, helpers, spectators and athletes when the report is posted on the SSAA website.

Foreword:

The process of organising a large, national event is lengthy, time consuming, often complicated and occasionally frustrating!

However, many years ago the seed was sown by committee members and fertilised by parents of our athletes at the time that not only could we host 'the nationals' but that we ought to host the nationals.

*With a wealth of experience amongst these two groups eyes were cast over the county to locate a suitable venue. In the summer of **2008** the magical words were uttered, "I think I've found you a course."*

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I visited NAS Merryfield and was immediately struck first and foremost by the sheer size of the canvas on which we could work and then by the countless opportunities of positioning a nationals cross-country course. (The final course was the third location surveyed within the perimeter of the airbase!) Additionally I realised that there was not only space for all the ancillary facilities needed but they could be positioned to be dry under foot.

And so the long process began....

My philosophy was that we would:

- *strive to make the event a success*
- *make a true cross-country course*
- *'think outside the box'*
- *benefit the local community*
- *be financially sound.*

*After numerous informal discussions and formal discussions during SSAA committee meetings an application was submitted to ESAA in March **2009** to host the 2012 cross-country championships.*

This was ratified in the autumn of 2009 and immediately followed by an application, which was accepted, to host the South-West Schools Cross-Country Championships at NAS Merryfield in February 2011.

It cannot be overstated how important the staging of these championships were to the hosting of the national championships.

*During **2010** countless contacts were made and visited with local companies, organisations and individuals with a view to provide facilities or help at the South-West Championships and to carry forward into 2012.*

Throughout and up front in all these contacts it was emphasised and repeated, emphasised and repeated, that the events were for school aged athletes, that the organising associations are charities and that the only income was from students' entry fees. Therefore, although the events are prestigious they are not profit making for either the associations or the individuals within.

My planning for the championships started immediately after the South-West Championships and was contained within a large folder which divided into subsections comprise the contents for this evaluation.

As the host county for the South-West Championships SSAA was both competition provider and event organiser. For the national championships ESAA is the competition provider and SSAA the event organiser. The responsibilities for both associations are quite distinct but with borders in some areas blurred. The following reviews the tasks undertaken by SSAA.

Contents:

	South-West	Nationals
Hire of NAS Merryfield	Yes	Yes
Course Maps	Yes	Yes
Course Construction	minimal	major undertaking
Police		Yes
Portaloos	Yes	Yes
First Aid	Yes	Yes
Public Address System	Yes	Yes
Marquees		Two-way radios
Refreshments	Yes	Yes
Parking	Yes	Yes
Officials	Yes	ESAA
Entries	Yes	Local
Logo		ESAA
		Yes
		Brochure
Programme	Yes	Handbook
		Operational Order

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		<i>Emergency Plan</i>
<i>Sponsorship</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Results</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>ESAA</i>
<i>Trophies & Medals</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>ESAA</i>
<i>Guests</i>		<i>Yes</i>
<i>Litter Clearance</i>		<i>Yes</i>
<i>Security</i>		<i>Yes</i>

Hire of NAS Merryfield:

NAS Merryfield by definition is Ministry of Defence property requiring a strict, and sometimes lengthy, procedure to be adhered to in order to book the facility for an event.

The hire licence was quite intricate with some clauses requiring change in order to allow all that was needed to stage the event. It cannot be emphasised too strongly how supportive MoD personnel, in particular Lt Cdr Bob Carter at the airbase, were towards the hosting of the championships.

The airfield is a highly utilised facility seeing many flights per day and therefore any booking must fall in line with this military activity. This had little consequence for the South-West Championships but with the setting up of the Nationals taking two days, with a similar but less hectic time span after the championships, much co-ordination had to take place to allow contractors, in particular, on site and work in the required areas.

The airfield also has its own gate security and thus frequent visits to the airfield by myself and other committee members had to be pre-planned as did all visits by other interested parties leading up to the championships.

Now that the championships has taken place it is not worrying to let it be known that if a national or international military intervention were needed requiring the use of NAS Merryfield we could have been given a minute's notice that the venue was unable to host the championships!!

Cost:

There is an easy pricing system to hire the airfield. I argued that many athletes for South-West (50%) and National Championships (30%) were under 15 and that all were school children. Consequently I was not charged the full rate.

A licence is also required by anyone who comes onto the airbase and sells goods. Thus individual stall holders must purchase this before operating. For the national championships I argued that this was not practicable and thus within the hire charge there was a fee for an 'open' trading licence.

Course Maps:

Having decided that the course would be positioned on the southern slopes of the airfield much pacing and measuring was carried out to make up loops allowing for the various distances for the different age groups and to position/fit in the start and finish areas.

(In our initial thinking there was a loop 5 and subsequent risk assessment decisions meant that the championships' course did not go into the fields south of the final course. Of interest - this latter area was used by many as a warm-up area prior to their race!)

Course maps were produced along with numerous other maps to show specific locations: spectator areas, car parking areas, marquee positions, crowd barriers, etc.

A month or so prior to the championships the definitive map was produced for the centre page of the championship programme.

Course Construction:

Enormous thanks must be expressed to Richard and Rhys Llewellyn-Eaton for their time and effort to produce the championships' course.

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The course construction for the South-West Championships in the weeks prior to the event was simply a matter of ensuring the forest paths were devoid of dangerous branches both at eye and foot level. Work was also carried out to ensure safe passage across a concrete bridge for both the South-West and National Championships.

Knowing that the course worked much time was spent during the autumn of 2011 completing four main tasks:

- *clearing all branches in the forest paths back to the 'trunk line' of the trees*
- *making hedge faces 'square', particularly at the bends in the course*
- *levelling the wheel ruts on the forest paths*
- *removing rubble from demolished buildings which was lying just under the surface*

Risk assessments were carried out in December 2011 and updated in February 2012. It was during these that anxiety was expressed regarding the first 400 metres of the course. As a consequence the exact route of the course was finalised not using the two fields south of the start area or cross the concrete bridge.

The local farmer, Mr John Lucas, who has the contract to maintain the pasture within the airfield, was most helpful throughout the process of preparing the course.

- *Soil was used to fill wheel ruts on the course*
- *Stakes (650+) needed to mark out the course were obtained from local athletic clubs and Millfield School, at nil cost*
- *Signage was either produced by ESAA or came from stock. Some of these were quite specific as areas of the airfield were out of bounds due either to that area not being part of the licence or being a nature reserve*
- *Defender fencing was purchased and erected to stop spectators entering the forests which are designated nature reserves*
- *1500 metres of crowd barriers were hired from the only supplier in the region who is most conversant with the needs of athletic events.*

Recommendation:

Amend ESAA Cross-Country Championship Rule 37. (Page 69 of the Handbook)

Police:

The Police were informed of the South-West Championships and the expected traffic flow but had no part in the planning or duties during the day.

In July 2011 I met with the Somerset Event Planning Officer, Adrian Gridley, and outlined the event. His recommendations were that given the number of expected vehicles travelling to the event all traffic should journey south along the A358 and that a one-way system should be put in place within the village of Ilton.

Although on paper this seems quite simple in practice the application for a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order gave me the most work and the most frustration!

Briefly:

- *the closure of a road is far simpler than the implementation of a one-way system*
- *the county council and district council have different responsibilities*
- *there is a difference of opinion between the council, the police and those who implement the Order*

After much anguish signs were hired from The AA who positioned these on the main 'A' roads whilst the many signs within the village were positioned by a local carnival club.

Knowing what I know now I would not have tried to apply for the Traffic Order myself in the hope of being cost effective but would have left everything to The AA from the outset.

A month, or so, before the championships a letter drop was carried out in Ilton explaining the temporary road system. Apart from one resident this information was met positively, particularly as it is unusual for residents to be informed of events held at NAS Merryfield.

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During the day of the championships the police were not officially on duty at the event but, PSCO's in particular, were 'in the locality' which just happened to be NAS Merryfield, thanks to Beat Manager Toni Lines.

Adrian Gridley, Toni Lines and Bob Carter were in the control tower during the day overseeing the event as a 'multi-agency command' who if need be liaised with ESAA officials.

Unfortunately there was a road traffic accident in the village which might have been caused by misinformation from a carnival club member.

Recommendation:

Use the professionals whatever the expense.

Portaloos:

Previous championships have seen many athletes, and spectators, queuing for the toilets.

Much thought and discussion lead us to approach 'she-pee' to see if this innovation, used at 'Glastonbury' and by women in the emergency services, could be installed at the championships. It was found to be financially not possible nor time saving as the system would have to be explained to all.

With half the athletes being boys, urinals were hired so that the boys' queue would be shorter with the subsequent knock-on effect for girls and the portaloos.

In total 49 portaloos and 6 urinals were hired. With each urinal being a 6 man facility this gave a total toilet number greater than previous years. However, after much discussion I can categorically state there is no best method of positioning urinals! Consequently the urinals were underused and there were the usual queues for the portaloos.

Also hired was a disabled loo, sited away from the main group of portaloos otherwise it does not remain solely for disabled use, a VIP loo positioned by the guest reception / presentation area and hand washing 'modules' even though all portaloos had hand wash gel as a standard fitting.

Portaloos and a urinal were placed beside the changing marquees but were not used.

Cost:

The hire of the toilets gave me a little concern for my contact for the South-West Championships 'mysteriously' left the company based in the north of the county. With the next contact I brokered the deal which included 9 free portaloos and a free disabled loo. But he, too, was replaced through a take-over of the company, AndyLoos, which meant my contact was now based in Newquay from where the portaloos came!!

Recommendation:

Use urinals but devise a format for their efficient use.

First Aid:

Mediwest UK were hired to carry out first aid duties. They had covered the South-West Championships in 2011 and 2012 and also the 2011 South-West Track & Field and Combined Events Championships.

Their event assessment based on the HSE Events Safety Guide produced a score of 27. This gave a slightly lower number of personnel on duty than I would have liked! A reassessment gave a slightly higher score but not into the next risk band. However, additional personnel were added. ESAA also provided a doctor.

Quad bikes were used to evacuate casualties from the course.

During the afternoon 54 casualties were treated (a number of plaster requests were not) and this comprised of 11 muscular problems, 7 cases of exhaustion, 3 with breathing difficulties, 7 sprains, 13 cuts, 6 slips/trips/falls,

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1 request for pain relief, 2 spinal cases (1 from the RTA in the village), 1 dislocation and 3 miscellaneous problems.

This gives a 2.55% casualty rate for the maximum number of entries.

One race had to be slightly delayed due to medical personnel and vehicles not being in position from the previous race.

Comment has been received from a parent stationed out on the course that the medics were more concerned with logging the injury and athlete details rather than administering the first aid treatment.

Public Address System:

So often at cross-country events the loudspeaker system, if present, is inadequate!

Knowing that the area allocated for the team bases was quite a distance from the main administration and finish areas and that the furthest parts of the course were some 600m from these central areas a system was sought which could place loudspeakers in these areas.

Ultrasound usually supplies to equestrian events - specifically three-day eventing at which far greater distances, up to 3 miles, have to be covered by the public address system. Loudspeakers were thus set up to cover the whole venue. These coupled to experienced announcers meant that all athletes and spectators could be kept fully informed of the afternoon's timetable and events.

Ultrasound also provided a presentation stage equipped with its own PA system which could be synced into the main system if need be.

Ultrasound provided the two-way radios (34) needed to ensure communication between all lead officials and support staff. This communication was routed through a communications centre, supplied by Ultrasound, manned by radio operators from 41F Air Cadets. Surprisingly they monitored much communication which was not pertinent to the event!

At one stage a channel 'went down' requiring the intervention of the PA system; unfortunately the 'excitable' request for first aid caused minor concern across the site.

My simplistic view of the communications system, using 6 channels, was reduced by Ultrasound personnel, using their vast knowledge, to four channels. This is one area of the organisation where I believe there is not a definitive format as officials, Police, PA, radio operators all have their preferred format.

Recommendation:

Formulate a two-way radio plan early in the planning and stick with it.

Marquees:

A local company, Universal Marquees, based about 6 miles from NAS Merryfield was hired for the event. This meant local staff was used and any problems during the installation could, if needed, be sorted quickly.

The company was most efficient erecting the twelve marquees in 1½ days including, what I saw as, very good quality hard flooring and carpeting.

The initial specification was altered due to:

- *VIP and media marquees physically joining the administration marquee giving a far larger marquee at no extra cost*
- *UKA requiring a small marquee for promotions*
- *Inprints being most reluctant to state their requirements (but were more than happy with what they were given).*

Furniture for the marquees was provided by the Somerset Scouts, who are based at NAS Merryfield, as part of a long standing agreement.

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Not for the first time, in fact quite often, the changing marquees were not used.

Recommendation:

Consider not having changing marquees by insisting teams have their own shelter.

Refreshments:

If the championships were going to be seen as successful then refreshments had to be good!

Much discussion took place during the initial planning looking at all possibilities to give a local, Somerset, West Country fare. This included pasties, fish and chips, cider, soft drinks, etc.

The resultant outlets were from the Dorset Farmers Markets who provided fresh, home grown food, Quality Catering who are based in Ilton and Taunton Athletic Club who sold home produced products.

These outlets supplied officials' lunches through a token system.

A minor complaint received at the previous year's championships was that officials did not receive drinks throughout the afternoon. Consequently Taunton AC was briefed to offer any official tea/coffee/biscuit/brownie throughout the day - similar to the system seen at track & field meetings. Some five trips around the venue were made with about 200 drinks consumed!

A VIP buffet, including salmon and wine, was also laid out supplied by the local public house. Three students were waitresses.

Recommendation:

Keep the masses happy.

Parking:

Given that during the initial inspection many acres of tarmac/concrete were going to be available for parking it was simply a case of allocating space for officials, team coaches and cars.

The area designated for coaches, immediately next to the 'team camp' area, was large enough to allow for ease of exit so that no team was delayed by others not being ready to leave. (A common occurrence at most venues.)

Team coaches and officials had their own dedicated traffic lane once inside the airfield. This was certainly much appreciated by the teams.

Car parking marshals were provided by 41F Air Cadets, who had carried out the duty at the South-West Championships, who completed the task extremely efficiently and courteously.

Each team (coach) was greeted with "Welcome to Somerset".

1510 cars entered the site and their parking space took up much of two runways!

Both entry to and exit from the car parks was orderly and little queuing took place.

Officials:

ESAA provide lead officials whilst local officials help in certain areas and provide all the marshalling for the course.

A great many officials were used for the South-West Championships and these were the core group for the championships. In the main they were parents of SSAA athletes with many the catalyst for us to host the championships.

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Some were involved in the planning of the championships whilst many others helped to set up the course in the days before the event.

All officials received a lunch ticket to be redeemed in any of the refreshment outlets.

Recommendation:

Get personnel involved early in the planning stages.

Entries:

This is solely the domain of ESAA the competition provider.

Logo:

An event logo is needed to 'mark' the event in terms of advertising and status.

Many versions were drafted before finalising a simplistic logo encompassing all relevant parties and information.

This was then altered to a design by Inprints but encompassing all that was in the original logo. My own personal view is that the final logo was indeed better than the simplistic version.

Recommendation:

Involve Inprints from the beginning of the process.

Programme:

A professionally printed, full colour, 16 page programme was made for the South-West Championships at nil cost by MailaDoc. In so doing MailaDoc became 'an active supporter of Somerset Schools AA'.

Discussion with the printer at local level confirmed that given the correct incentives this could also be the case for the nationals' programme. Constraints at national level meant, however, that this was not possible.

However, printed free of charge was an 8 page, full colour brochure outlining the event and given to all county secretaries at the ESAA ACM or sent by post if not present. Also contained within this package were a dozen, or so, Somerset tourist brochures and numerous contact details of accommodation providers within the county.

This information was also posted on the SSAA website.

In the month or so prior to the championships specific pages for the programme were sent to ESAA who collated the programme.

Other paperwork for the event was:

- *The Event Handbook – a 32 page document outlining the event in detail and sent to ESAA officers*
- *The Operational Order – an 11 page document which was very much the working document in the days leading up to the event. This was sent to ESAA officers and lead officials at national and local level.*
- *The Major Incident Plan – a 12 page document produced to show responsibilities and lines of communication in the event of a situation deemed a major incident requiring the implementation of the multi-agency command. This was sent to ESAA officers and lead officials.*

Recommendation:

Inform counties of details as soon as possible so they can plan their championships.

Sponsorship:

Numerous companies and organisations were approached and placed an advertisement in the South-West programme. These were approached again with a view of placing a similar advert in the nationals' programme which some did.

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Results:

This is solely the domain of ESAA the competition provider.

Trophies & Medals:

This is solely the domain of ESAA the competition provider.

Guests:

The Lord Lieutenant was initially approached to be the guest of honour. Prior engagements meant Lady Gass could not attend.

The Commodore of RNAS Yeovilton, Paul Chivers, an ex-pupil of our treasurer, was approached but he too had a prior engagement.

Lord Coe was also approached with a view of 'popping in' as he has a connection in the county. But he too declined the informal invitation.

Guests were two members of the County Council and two members of the District Council, one of whom, Sue Steele, attended the planning meetings.

Four international ex-Somerset Schools athletes were also guests who represented cross-country, track and field, race walking and a winter Olympian who is a member of the International Olympic Committee.

A disappointment to me was that the guest list did not appear in the programme and thus the cross-section of guests attending was unknown to all.

Recommendation:

Include guests of honour details in the programme.

Litter Clearance:

One of the conditions of the hire of NAS Merryfield was that no litter must be left. Simply, if litter gets 'dragged' into aircraft engines the repair cost could reach £250 000!

A collection and recycling organisation was approached who clear litter from festivals. It was agreed that all stalls and retail outlets could leave all their litter and that throughout the day litter would be collected and placed into the appropriate recycling bins which would be in abundance throughout the site.

Unfortunately this organisation went into liquidation. Perhaps fortunately I found that the event does not produce a great deal of litter, particularly as water in bottles would not be given to each competitor.

I therefore approached the Scouts who gave each team a litter sack, collected litter throughout the day, completed a litter sweep when teams had left and disposed of the rubbish. There was in fact very little litter, thanks to good individual county organisation. (Of note, conversely, was the huge number of cable ties strewn along crowd barrier positions left from the advertising hoardings!)

Security:

The setting up started two days before the championships and involved much expensive equipment. With a traveller camp adjacent to NAS Merryfield overnight security was essential.

For the championships we were advised by the Police that the team and retail areas needed visible security whilst four specific entrances; main gate, two changing marquees and finish marquee also required uniformed security.

Nothing untoward took place at any time with security personnel, from Walford Security, enjoying the experience of the national championships.

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Conclusions:

"The level of planning and attention to detail ensured that everything within our control was effective, efficient and therefore likely to be successful. It is my opinion that this resulted from a number of very positive factors:

- *Previous Championship which had involved some of the existing committee in an organisational role.*
- *Early decision made re staging the Championship - ensured everyone involved would have sufficient time to plan - including opportunities to 'recce' venues and Championships in other Counties.*
- *Identification of a first-class venue ; all the ensuing discussions/meetings/briefings to clarify logistics required - everything from licences, access, one-way systems, weight of coaches, litter, to planning around 'flying days'.*
- *Formation of a small 'working-party' committee who met formally to identify specific details and requirements - Brian's 'to do' list growing ever-longer at each meeting.*
- *Subsequent meetings where actions taken were reported back, advice sought on further developments. Some items on 'to do' list ticked off, others added!*
- *Frequent 'informal' discussions to clarify thinking.*
- *High degree of communication between committee members - face to face/phone calls/emails.*
- *Hugely supportive positive relationships within the committee.*
- *Secretary and Course Designer both blessed with immense patience, knowledge, determination and energy.*
- *Secretary decisive yet always willing/happy to seek advice/clarification from other committee members.*
- *Recognition of the importance and value of involving local people with specific and significant skills gained from their working life and/or organising other events.*
- *Involving vast numbers of parents of Somerset Schools' athletes and 'friends' of SSAA.*
- *Attention to detail - toilets, refreshments, traffic schemes, signage, residents, guest list, marquees, first aid, retail, photography, course safety, timings of road system...the list seemed endless - but the plates were kept spinning and to my knowledge, very few got broken!*
- *The weather - the one factor over which we had no control - watching the weather forecast during the week preceding the Championships took on a special significance...it stayed dry!*

This is an overview; by no means an exhaustive list as I cannot begin to know the true extent of the work undertaken by Brian and Richard.

Les, our treasurer played an important role in reining in where necessary – and sanctioning, even encouraging, more generous spending when needed. He is also the one most likely to throw in questions or comments which often, thankfully, force us to make better decisions.

As for me - I'm already missing Brian's 6-a-day emails! I've kept them in a special folder... for when we do it all again....."

SIAB International –

Sam Sommerville represented England in the Home International in Perth. He finished eighth at NAS Merryfield and improved his position within the England team by one place although placing eighth overall as the championship was won by a very good Scottish runner.

Finally with the Merryfield championships clearly being "the pinnacle of my achievements within the Association" I feel others should take over the reins of the cross-country section, particularly the senior team management role 'on the ground'.

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The records show that I became cross-country secretary at the 1995 AGM. In the two years preceding this the section was run by a sub-committee with no designated lead person. If my memory serves me well I was voted in predominantly to complete the increasing paperwork involved with getting a team to the national championships. I was certainly not a team manager!

This was so much the case that my first recollection of attending a national championships was in Weymouth in 1996 as a mere spectator!

In 1997 I took the team to Newark where I vividly remember the look of astonishment within the team when we pulled up in the Travel Inn car park for the overnight stay - for I believe this was the first time the team had stayed in a 'luxurious hotel' prior to the race day. It was also the year in which team members bought for the first time a wet-top! Again there were astonished faces not only within our team but all other teams when the Somerset team, kitted identically, walked onto the course. The day, I remember, was quite windy with marquee sides blowing in the wind. However, I spent a great deal of my day with Ben Tickner who, by finishing 9th in the Intermediate Boys', was a reserve for the home international. Unfortunately ESAA organisation meant a protracted wait to see if those ahead of Ben were able to take their international place – they all did.

In 1998 the team travelled on the day to a very wet (runners removing mud by swimming in the river!) Cheltenham. I stayed with friends overnight to get the administration completed prior to the team arriving and to remain at the end, after the team had left. I was utterly surprised when I was asked to collect the **Girls' 'C Group' trophy**; even more when a little later I received the **Boys' 'C Group' trophy**!

Although I can vividly recall the location and facilities of the 1999 nationals in Luton I am unable to remind myself of any of the races! [I'm afraid my collation of SSAA archives is still not complete.] For many across the country this would be quite unforgivable as the intermediate boy's champion was a certain Mohammed Farah! (Fourth was Francis Tickner a mere 9 seconds adrift.) What is totally unforgivable - I cannot remember **Courtney Birch** winning the Junior Girls title! This was Courtney's second title as the previous year she had won wearing the vest of Merseyside.

2000 saw the national championships run at Parliament Hill. An exasperatingly difficult coach journey across, what seemed the whole of, London gave a far later than anticipated arrival at the far end of the course! However, this was not to the detriment of the team for we had the first race winner with **Courtney Birch**, intermediate girl, adding to her success of the previous years. The team, athletes and managers alike, were exuberant with this success until word spread that we were leading the second race! Attention was directed to the intermediate boys – with huge delight and ecstatic cheering **Frank Tickner** crossed the line first. What a start but sadly not repeated for the remaining four races.

Courtney won the SIAB International Cross-Country titles in 1998 to 2000, whilst Frank would have represented England in 2000.

The 2001 championships were cancelled due to a foot-and-mouth outbreak across the country, predominantly prevalent in the south-east where the event was to be held. I do remember being upset at having to inform athletes of this, particularly Courtney for throughout the season she had been preparing for a fourth consecutive ESAA title.

Thankfully Chelmsford was able to postpone their planning for a year. Unfortunately disaster was not entirely averted in 2002 as high winds (again) caused the finish marquee to collapse. There were many (minor) injuries; one particular worrying spinal injury was sustained by one of our parents which took months to heal completely!

The national championships were held in Brighton (2003), Maidstone (2004) and Norwich (2005). The latter I mark as a turning point for team spirit was particularly dogged with all the 48 athletes

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finishing their event (some in noticeable discomfort) whilst many openly stated that representing the county was a prominent aim. Parents also began travelling and staying with the team uplifting the entire group with an added dimension.

The championship moved to Mansfield in 2006 with 'Premier' prefixing Travel Inn. For the county it certainly was a premier event for not only did **Nathan Young** win the Junior Boys event, and gain an international vest, but the **Junior Boys' team** were crowned champions with an outstanding team performance and a remarkable team score of 155 points! This, in fact, was the first of three clean sweeps for our Junior Boys' teams at national championships that year.

Also in 2006 I began to produce comprehensive AGM reports and talk began of hosting the nationals!

2007 saw the re-introduction of our junior cross-country championships and success at the highest level was anticipated rather than hoped for. Leeds hosted the nationals and for the first time 10 team managers accompanied the team – far more than other counties but an Association decision to leave no athlete wanting. The spirit now within our teams was exemplified by the **Senior Girls** who won the H Whitham Trophy for highest placed 8th athlete. I wrote, *"... no other trophy illustrates the personality of the Somerset teams than this trophy for throughout the weekend the support for each other was outstanding at all times."* Also supporting our teams was the Association's 1979/1981 chairman!

Our success in 2006 resulted in a large team representing the county at the London Marathon – a different but highly memorable occasion.

2008 saw the team journey to Liverpool and to now stay in a 'Premier Inn'. The team's expectation and personality were again fully evident as all representatives completed their course and the **Senior Girls** retained the H Whitham trophy much to the absolute delight of our 8th placed finisher. Belated surprise came when at the track and field championships we were presented with the **'C Group' Girls' Trophy**.

Stanford Hall, Leicestershire, was the venue for the 2009 national championships and there was disappointment as the Senior Girls finished well packed but did not retain the H Whitham Trophy. Simply because the team had finished second overall and in so doing enabled the retention of the **Girls 'C Group' Trophy**. What a pleasant, unexpected surprise awarded as the team was just about to depart.

Of note during the season was that 13 team managers had been used. So from the regular six, maybe seven, in the 1990s our organisational teams were also increasing in strength and personality. This is even more remarkable for with great sadness we mourned the passing of Angela Thomas, who *"... was a stalwart member of our team managers with a wealth of knowledge for our athletes, along with an enthusiastic and vivacious personality, which inspired the whole team."*

2010 was the year of the highly changeable weather in Manchester, a distraught athlete who had to leave the team early on the Saturday morning through illness, athletes not stopping until crossing the finish line and the surprise on the face of **Emily Smith** as she was crowned Junior Girl champion.

The heady heights could not be maintained in Nottingham in 2011 but athletes knew they had all represented the county to the best of their ability. Equally pleasing was that during the season 15 team managers had been part of the success.

However, foundations had been laid over some 15 years to enable the Association to stage the 2012 national championships and make them such a memorable triumph from all perspectives.

BB

2012 Cross-Country Teams

Minor Boys

	Name	School	County	SW
1	Bradley Seager	Huish Episcopi	1	9
2	Ieuan Watkins	Holyrood	2	18
3	Charlie Samouelle	Millfield Prep	3	30
4	Joe Barker	Minehead Middle	5	47
5	Dominic Court	Taunton Prep	4	49
6	Alex Williams	The Blue	6	51
7	Aidan Nicholls	Hugh Sexeys	7	56
8	Joseph Heath	Ansford	10	58
9	William Hawker	Minehead Middle	9	62
10	Tom Perkins	Hazlegrove	8	64
R1	Will Bourne	Hazlegrove	11	
R2	Gabriel Toomey	All Hallows	12	
R3	William Lewthwaite	Millfield Prep	13	
R4	Mitchell Chadwick	Hugh Sexeys	14	
R5	Alistair Johnson	Hazlegrove	15	

Junior Boys

	Name	School	County	SW	ESAA
1	Sam Sommerville	Stanchester	DNS	1	8
2	Archie Walton	The Castle	4	21	59
3	Ben Jones	Queens College	3	15	70
4	Dan Wilde	Queens College	5	11	89
5	Mark Bailey	Whistone	6	20	120
6	Felix Rusby	Downside	8	18	138
7	Luke Prior	King Alfreds	1	17	143
8	Dominic Taylor	Heathfield School	2	5	276
9	Patrick Free	Queens College	7	19	
10	Freddie King	Queens College	9	30	
R1	Oliver Dickson	King Alfreds	10		
R2	George Sawrey Cookson	Hazlegrove	11		
R3	Tom Welch	Kingsmead	12		
R4	Josh Boon	Millfield	13		
R5	James Plummer	Kings School	14		
R6	James Bridge	The Park	17		

Intermediate Boys

	Name	School	County	SW	ESAA
1	Joe Walton	The Castle	3	4	15
2	Matthew Dickinson	King Alfreds	1	9	16
3	Oliver Fox	Kings College	4	5	22
4	Charlie Martin	Millfield	DNS	44	155
5	Max Patch	Holyrood	2	6	173
6	Philip Bridge	The Park	5	16	175
7	Matt Cole	Westfield	6	37	305
8	Sebastian Harris	Downside	7	34	DNF
9	Joe Barnes	Kings of Wessex	8	42	
10	Tom Parkinson	Millfield	9	49	
R1	Will Jomas	Kings of Wessex	10		
R2	Scott Jenkins	Kings of Wessex	11		
R3	David Lewis	West Somerset	12		
R4	Ben Baldwin	Downside	13		
R5	Alexander Lawless	Downside	14		
R6	Sam Webb	Brymore	15		

Senior Boys

	Name	School	County	SW	ESAA
1	Blair Brown	Queens College	1	DNS	6
2	Rowan Preece	Richard Huish	2	6	40
3	George Harris	Yeovil College	3	8	84
4	Sam Bedford	Millfield	9	21	123
5	Jamie Coles	Richard Huish	6	18	128
6	Isaac Tashimowitz	Kings of Wessex	4	31	204
7	Zach Stephenson	Millfield	7	33	207
8	Guy Marshman	Millfield	10	25	239
9	Alex Rogers	West Somerset	14	43	
10	Connor Banks	Taunton School	5	44	
R1	George Rawlins	Downside	11	46	
R2	Marcus Gawronsky	Kings College	8		
R3	Alex Toomey	Downside	12		
R4	Charles Harboud	Downside	13		
R5	Fred Whittaker	Wells Cathedral	15		



2012 Cross-Country Teams

Minor Girls

	Name	School	County	SW
1	Amelia Vance	Wellington School	1	1
2	Alice Davis	Hugh Sexeys	2	2
3	Jess Brown	Queens College	3	9
4	Lauren Dolan	Millfield Prep	4	19
5	Amy Barlow	Crispin	7	26
6	Kizzy Price	Taunton Prep	5	31
7	Kirsty Jenkins	Hugh Sexeys	8	35
8	Amy Luck	Chilton Cantelo	10	37
9	Josie Taylor	Hazlegrove	12	51
10	Katie Hawkins	Hazlegrove	9	55
R1	Fenella Rice	Millfield Prep	6	
R2	Victoria McCabe	All Hallows	11	
R3	Olivia Weatherlake	Wellington School	13	
R4	Heidi Clothier	Sexeys	14	
R5	Rosie Sawrey-Cookson	Hazlegrove	15	
R6	India Gill	Sexeys	16	



Junior Girls

	Name	School	County	SW	ESAA
1	Lucy Baldwin	All Hallows	2	10	54
2	Imogen Keeling	Kings Hall	3	19	177
3	Isobel Kidner	Wells Cathedral	5	37	230
4	Amy D'Arcy	Stanchester	8	55	264
5	Ellen Falkingham	Queens College	4	28	278
6	Lydia Lavallin	Huish Episcopi	1	25	282
7	India Cooper	Wells Cathedral	7	52	313
8	Clemmie Kerr	Hazlegrove	11	59	330
9	Tessa Warby	Kings Hall	12	64	
10	Alice Hannan	Millfield	9	DNF	
R1	Georgie McTear	Millfield Prep	6		
R2	Daisy Mant	All Hallows	10		
R3	Olivia Reid	Kings Hall	13		
R4	Beth Wilson-Brown	Kings School	14		
R5	Francesca Fitzgerald	Downside	15		
R6	Charlotte Bird	Huish Episcopi	16		



Intermediate Girls

	Name	School	County	SW	ESAA
1	Emily Smith	Wells Cathedral	2	3	33
2	Amy Cooper	Millfield	1	5	63
3	Holly Brown	Queens College	6	DNS	75
4	Grace Smalley	The Castle	5	21	164
5	Rebecca Carver	Whitstone	4	19	222
6	Charlotte Rogers	Taunton School	7	36	258
7	Ellie Potter	Wells Cathedral	10	37	289
8	Lilly Hawkins	Stanchester	3	29	304
9	Hermione Toomey	Downside	11	44	
10	Keren Greenow	Queens College	8	45	
R1	Hannah Wilson	Queens College	9	48	
R2	Jemma Jones	Sexeys	12		
R3	Daisy Hunt	Wellington School	13		
R4	Aby Gibbons	Whitstone	14		
R5	Lucy Longbottom	Queens College	16		



Senior Girls

	Name	School	County	SW	ESAA
1	Rachel Langbein	Richard Huish	2	7	46
2	Aoife Thorogood	The Blue	1	DNF	67
3	Amelia Evans	Kings College	4	16	98
4	Harriet Rogers	Taunton School	3	9	129
5	Kitty Bartlett	Millfield	8	45	206
6	Emma Wilson	Richard Huish	9	39	208
7	Ellen Cheetham	Richard Huish	5	40	221
8	Jess Potter	Yeovil College	7	31	239
9	Esme Sheridan	The Blue	6	41	
10	Bella Sandall	Sexey's School	DNS	54	
R1	Emily Ruffell-Hazel	Queens College	10		

