

**SOMERSET SCHOOLS ATHLETIC
ASSOCIATION**



**Cross Country
2014
Report & Results**





SOMERSET SCHOOLS ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

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It is with much sorrow that I start this report with the extremely sad and very recent news that two of our team managers have passed away.

Allister Steele over a very short period of time had become one of the stalwarts of our management team. He was a 'pupil person' – always happiest with the athletes - passing on, in a quiet manner, his knowledge and enthusiasm. He was my 'rear gunner' on the top deck of the nationals' coach relieving anxieties, sorting out administration. Allister's untimely death will leave a huge void in so many lives.

Clive Thomas was the catalyst for so much that has happened within the cross-country section over the past three decades. He was a lover of running and wanted to pass all he knew to younger athletes. He was a competitor, and team player, who wanted those around him to succeed and organised events to enable this to happen. Clive's untimely death will leave a vacuum within the cross-country and road running fraternities within the county as a whole.

Our thoughts are with Allister's and Clive's families and close friends during this very difficult period.

2014 Cross-County Report

It would seem, particularly given the above, that the cross-country seasons are as undulating as the terrain on which our athletes compete!

2012 was a year of much organisation and national prestige; 2013 was one of much frustration as plan after plan was thwarted by the weather. And so 2014 turned out to be a year of relief as plans came to fruition in a grand manner.

Junior Championships –

The championships took place, as usual, at King's College with Richard at the helm of the day's organisation. The course was slightly different to previous years but the young runners were ably led by SSAA/King's College senior athletes acting as 'hares'. This is now a common place occurrence at the event and perhaps does more than anything to alleviate the anxieties of the novice athletes so that many go forward into our senior teams.

SOMERSET SCHOOLS ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

The champions and finishers were:

	Individual	Finishers	Team
Year 7 Girls	Rebecca Brown (Queen's College)	64	King's Hall
Year 7 Boys	George Tester (Taunton Prep.)	65	Taunton Prep.
Year 8 Girls	Sophie Jones (Queen's College)	48	Taunton Prep.
Year 8 Boys	Charlie MacNiece (Queen's College)	36	Bishop Fox's

County Championships –

It seems years ago, and it is, Pat suggested to me that very close to Yeovil (thus with good transport links) there was an outstanding cross-country course. We walked the course and ear-marked it for, perhaps, an ESAA championships! Many seasons later, with another venue hosting an ESAA championship, it was decided that Aldon Hill would be the venue for the 2014 County Championships.

In the months leading up to the event I held numerous meetings at Aldon so that those involved with the organisation could get an idea of the terrain. To a person all were amazed and exhilarated by what the 'blank canvas' could offer.

With much help from Richard a course was designed to utilize fully the rolling countryside: giving space for parking, for start/finish areas, for spectator advantage and for tough and realistic competition. (How often have I said over the years that we always strive to produce championship courses that reflect the true nature of cross-country running?)

With the Merryfield skeleton still swinging in the wardrobe it was relatively easy to make contact with the many, Oh so many!, organisations and individuals who have an affinity with SSAA. And so the support structure for the event was put into place and relevant information and entry forms sent to area secretaries.

On the morning of the event personnel arrived early to set things up such that by the time of the first arrivals the course was well defined and athletes could walk the course. Their immediate reaction was what I had hoped for – amazement, wonder, expectation

The weather during the preceding days was, as last year, atrocious however the Aldon Hill subsoil is nothing less than astonishing for any rain seems to drain immediately away leaving the ground remarkably dry. This indeed was the case for athletes were found sitting on the grass putting on running shoes as if it were the height of summer! Consequently the course, itself, was dry and fast, particularly along the long straight leading from the start before descending down into the valley. After running along the valley floor, through a small wood, there was a steep incline up to the large flat finish area. From the designated spectator area the whole of the course could be seen apart from the steep incline, although this was easily accessible if spectators so wished. Once the championship was under way my tasks were complete – it was quite wonderful to stand in the valley and look up to the 'long straight' along the ridge line and see runners silhouetted against the light grey sky!

After a number of races I began to chat with competitors asking what they thought of the course – as with previous reactions the overwhelming response was 'fantastic'. So many thanks, Pat, for finding and persuading me that we should use Aldon Hill and huge thanks to the Battens family for welcoming so many people and putting into place all the notification needed to allow such an event on their land.

SOMERSET SCHOOLS ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

The champions and finishers were:

	Individual	Finishers	Team
Minor Girls	Elena Sidman (Wells Cathedral)	42	Taunton
Junior Girls	Sophie Hamilton (Hazlegrove)	41	Taunton
Inter Girls	Lucy Baldwin (Millfield)	28	Mendip
Senior Girls	Isobel Glaisher (Millfield)	18	Mendip
Minor Boys	Luke Macpherson (Preston)	40	Yeovil
Junior Boys	Ben Hooper (Millfield)	47	Yeovil
Inter Boys	Sam Sommerville (Stanchester)	37	Taunton
Senior Boys	Oliver Fox (King's College)	28	Taunton

I must extend thanks to the many helpers from all quarters who, once again, turned out to support this event. There are never enough, as we know, so special thanks to the one or two individuals that either multi-tasked or having finished one designated task volunteered to fill a gap elsewhere.

In summing up two comments, from colleagues whose views I value made me appreciate why we do what we do in the way that we do it, "Great course, I think the best I have ever seen; particularly as the last short steep incline is a real test of cross-country ability and training." and ".... if you just moved the start back to here, put the car park over there, put the marquees there, this would be a course for the " The last was surely in jest!

South-West Championships –

The selection for this championship took place immediately after the county and was held at The Park School; many thanks to Larry for the facility. Selection was quite straight forward as so many had (wanted to) competed at Aldon or had informed us of their (non)availability.

The website was utilised fully to enable those selected to confirm their availability and as now is becoming quite common the bulk of the team had confirmed by the Tuesday evening. Postal information was also sent to schools.

As the previous year it was decided that athletes would be asked to make their own travel arrangements to Bournemouth for the event. This also worked very well with the grandstand at the athletic track being the base for the team and kitting out.

We were again the best supported team both in terms of team managers and parents. Many thanks to the many individuals, within many different groups, who make up the entire county team.

However, I felt the course (set out on gorse land adjacent to the athletics arena) supposedly a step up from a county competition was not only difficult to navigate but also very difficult to marshal and administer as the start area, finish area and administrative centre were in the corners of a large triangle at least 300 metre apart!

However this did not deter our representatives for the county had an outstanding day, albeit not officially recognised! The south-west rules state that if at least one team is unable to attend for quite specific reasons, eg severe weather, there will be no team competition. Two counties did not participate due to the danger of travelling because of the anticipated hurricane style winds which did take place. Thankfully the winds during the two hour competition, although high, were not severe.

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Thus the team results listed below are unofficial. The champions were:

	Individual	Team	Somerset Ind / Team
Minor Girls	E Sidman (Somerset)	Somerset	1st / 1st
Junior Girls	S Hamilton (Somerset)	Somerset	1st / 1st
Inter Girls	E Ackford (Devon)	Devon	13 th / 4 th
Senior Girls	I Glaisher (Somerset)	Somerset	1st / 1st
Minor Boys	Joel Kirby (Devon)	Devon	8 th / 2 nd
Junior Boys	T Bower (Avon)	Dorset	8 th / 2 nd
Inter Boys	W Battershill (Devon)	Somerset	2 nd / 1 st
Senior Boys	A Carter (Wiltshire)	Devon	2 nd / 2 nd

In such difficult conditions there are times when it has to be 'all hands on deck'! I was unfortunately called unexpectedly into finishing funnel duty at the very moment the Junior Girls race was finishing. By the time I had got myself organised I was logging in the eleventh finisher. It was then I realised that behind this there were few Somerset athletes; where were they? I should not have worried for the county finished 7 in the first 10 and I had simply not seen them. This was a huge personal disappointment for on paper I knew we were good but surely not that good!

Even though the team travelled as individuals to Bournemouth the usual team spirit and camaraderie began to be seen during the afternoon which is such an important and beneficial part for the following national championships. This was no more so than within the senior girls' team (who I did have the pleasure of seeing through the finish line with 6 in the first 8) even though a quite unusual incident happened at the back of the start pen when Grace Smalley was spiked in the forehead, yes forehead, by a fellow Somerset athlete which necessitated immediate hospitalisation!

National Championships –

Selection took place two weeks after the south-west championships and as close to the deadline for entries as possible enabling all athletes with minor injuries to declare themselves fit, or unfit.

The huge difficulty we faced was who not to select from the strong team and individual performances at the south-west championships. We knew we had a (large) group from which to chose - a good situation to be in but one no one really relishes.

Having selected the teams the website was again used to notify individuals quickly, to pass on all the information and to receive confirmation of selection.

The national championships took place at Donnington Park with the team staying, for a second time, in the Premier Inn, Ashby-de-la-Zouch. **All** team members travelled with the team and were accompanied by ten team managers. The facilities offered by Premier Inn were 'as usual' with everyone not only enjoying the experience but gaining the benefits of a team night and morning together before 'the big one'.

The Donnington Park course was positioned on a, long grassed, undulating (rutted), windswept area to the side of the motor racing circuit with a tightly packed administration area close to the start/finish area which itself was on a spur some 400 metres from the looped course! Spectators thus had a choice of watching the start and finish or watching the race!

Having done so well at the south-west championships, albeit with two county teams missing and with no drop-outs from the strong teams selected, hopes were indeed high that we would bring back silverware!

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Each race has each county's best eight athletes, giving a maximum of 352 runners. Thus for many competitors finishing on the first page of the results is an achievement; finishing within the first 100 competitors is very much a standard achievement whilst achieving a top 50 place / top 20 place / top 10 place is indeed 'putting in a fine performance'!

Using these benchmarks the county team, of 48, produced the following statistics:

First page of results –	41
Top 100 –	19
Top 50 –	12
Top 20 –	4
Top 10 –	2

Hidden within these figures are stories of individual success, team success and surprise. Below are just a few:

- ✓ For the first time the team contained a senior boy French student studying at Cannington Centre, Bridgewater College. I know Fabien thoroughly enjoyed his two 'outings' with the county team.
- ✓ The Intermediate Boys' team confirmed their position as the best in the south-west region and achieved third position in 'C' group nationally.
- ✓ The Senior Boys' team maintained their second position within the region and also achieved second position in 'C' Group nationally.
- ✓ Oliver Fox (last year's intermediate England captain) finished 13th in the senior race; how nice it was to see him congratulate and being congratulated in the finish marquee by the many friends he has made from across the country.
- ✓ The Senior Girls' team remained first placed south-west team but also gained first place in the 'C' group by coming 6th overall, only being beaten by five strong 'A' group counties.
- ✓ Isobel Glaisher (10th) and Emily Smith (18th) both had superb runs as did the smiling Grace Smalley: relieved to be in the team and fully recovered from her south-west catastrophe.
- ✓ The Junior Girls had quite simply a superb team performance -
 - ✓ Top south-west team and top 'C' group team.
 - ✓ The scoring six in the top 70
 - ✓ Four runners in the top 30
 - ✓ The best placed, Sophie Hamilton in third position
 - ✓ Yet – only the second team on the day! From where did London find its runners? Their scoring six were in the top 52 but their first five in the top 20 – remarkable! (Their 7th and 8th runners, though, on the second page.)
 - ✓ The last Somerset team member in 83rd position – remarkable!
- ✓ Thus the Junior Girls, resplendent in county tracksuits, were joyously on the podium and also in receipt of the Stedman Trophy for highest placed 8th finisher. This is not the first time a county age group team has won such a trophy, vividly showing the team commitment and bonding within the whole group.
- ✓ And, to match, and in my book surpass, the Junior Girls' triumph ALL members of every team finished their race. It doesn't happen often but when it does team camaraderie is at its highest.

When all the races were over we waited for the announcement of 'C' group champions, but nothing was forthcoming. Sadly with David Littlewood not at the helm trophy presentations were not the smooth operation they usually are. I endeavoured to find the results and hopefully collect a trophy. After much rummaging I was given the Group 'C' girls trophy which was taken back to the waiting team.

SOMERSET SCHOOLS ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

The girls were in raptures of delight for they had retained the Sidney Rose Trophy. The boys were a little downhearted for having won their trophy in 2012 there was hope we may have 'done the double'. The boys, in fact, came second as they had done the previous year.

Finally I extend my thanks to the team managers who so very ably enable the athletes to do their very best and in so doing quietly but so efficiently do their own very best. Thank you to:

Brian Baker	Jane Yandell
Richard Bowden	Katie Cobb
Allister Steele	Charlotte Fisher
Richard Llewellyn-Eaton	
Larry Tulett	
Adrian Palmer	
Jason Allen	
Clive Thomas	

SIAB International –

This took place on the Saturday following the national championships at Canon Slade School, Bolton. The course, over a railway bridge from the main school site, was set out on the school playing fields, encompassing forest trails, with a panoramic view of the surrounding hills.

Sophie Hamilton represented England finishing in eighth place. However, her run was marred by a very severe wind carrying freezing cold rain from those surrounding hills. It was a credit to all 32 runners that they should complete the course.

England won the Junior Girls Championship along with all other age groups whilst Ireland and England shared the individual champions.

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2014 Cross-Country Teams

Minor Girls

		SSAA	SW
Elena Sidman	Mendip	1	1
Ella Leonard	Taunton	5	7
Rebecca Brown	Taunton	2	8
Ella-Mae Wright	Yeovil	11	18
Daisy Davis	Yeovil	3	20
Verity Vance	Taunton	6	24
Indeigh Winterson	Sedgemoor	9	25
Fay Graham	Taunton	7	30
Cordelia Clarke	Taunton	8	33
Ocean Moore	Yeovil	10	36
Georgina Farmer	Sedgemoor	4	
Ellie Carrow	Taunton	12	

Junior Girls

		SSAA	SW	NATS
Sophie Hamilton	Hazlegrove	1	1	3
Alice Davies	King of Wessex	2	4	24
Amelia Vance	Queen's College	7	3	26
Sophie Jones	Queen's College	4	10	30
Ella Sykes	Millfield	5	22	33
Kizzy Price	Taunton School	3	7	70
Caitlin Carnegie	Sexey's	6	6	80
Jessica Brown	Queen's College	9	5	83
Elise Thorner	Huish Episcopi	10	18	
Lauren Ashurst	Hugh Sexey's	8	21	
	National team			2
	SW team		1	1
	C Group team		1	1



Intermediate Girls

		SSAA	SW	NATS
Harriet Lord	Millfield	3	22	87
Lydia Lavallin	Taunton School	4	16	102
Lucy Baldwin	Millfield	1	13	178
Elisha Evans	Millfield	2	dns	189
Amy D'Arcy	Stanchester	5	31	244
Elen Falkingham	Queen's College	7	28	254
Bethany Wilson-Brown	King's School	9	36	258
Imogen Keeling	King's College	6	42	269
India Cooper	Wells Cathedral	8	38	
Molly Brown	The Castle	12	43	
India Bannister	King's College	10	44	
	National Team			32
	SW team		4	5
	C Group team		3	7



Senior Girls

		SSAA	SW	NATS
Isobel Glaisher	Millfield	dns	1	10
Emily Smith	Wells Cathedral	2	2	18
Holly Brown	Queen's College	dns	4	46
Olivia Gwynne	Millfield	1	dns	51
Rebecca Carver	Strode College	5	6	118
Hermione Seymour	Millfield	3	5	124
Lilly Hawkins	Strode College	6	14	155
Grace Smalley	Taunton School	7	dns	157
Jemma Jones	Sexey's	4	8	dns
Hermione Toomey	Downside	8	17	
Charlotte Rogers	Richard Huish College	dns	26	
	National Team			6
	SW team		1	1
	C' Group team		1	1



2014 Cross-Country Teams

Minor Boys

		SSAA	SW
Luke Macpherson	Yeovil	1	8
Mattea Howard	Mendip	2	9
Oliver Haines-Francis	Mendip	3	12
Luke Manley	Yeovil	5	18
Thomas Atkins	Yeovil	6	21
Joe Messenger	Taunton	9	29
Fabian Reah	Taunton	10	37
Samuel Ough	Yeovil	8	38
Innes Davidson	Yeovil	4	
Dylan Leonard	Taunton	7	
Jonah Billington	Taunton	11	
Ben Luxton	Taunton	12	

Junior Boys

		SSAA	SW	NATS
Ben Hooper	Millfield	1	8	131
Bradley Seager	Huish Episcopi	8	13	149
Henry Crow	Millfield	3	20	152
Samuel Edwards	Wellington	2	9	159
Alex Williams	The Blue School	5	dns	189
Josh Thorne	Huish Episcopi	6	dnf	209
Joe Barker	West Somerset	7	16	258
Ben Lloyd	Preston	4	dns	271
Dylan Dukes	Wells Blue	11	24	
Matt Keogan	Queen's College	12	33	
Liam Wollington	Holyrood	9	36	
	National Team			29
	SW team		2	3
	C Group team		2	5



Intermediate Boys

		SSAA	SW	NATS
Sam Sommerville	Stanchester	1	2	28
Archie Walton	The Castle	4	12	34
Luke Prior	King Alfred's	2	4	63
Dan Wilde	Queen's College	5	6	109
Jonathan Birkett	Downside	8	23	209
Jamie Price	Taunton School	7	22	225
Felix Rusby	Downside	3	8	297
James Bridge	The Park	6	18	320
Jamie Williams	Wells Blue	9	29	
Finnian Day	Downside	10	40	
	National Team			18
	SW team		1	1
	C Group team		1	3



Senior Boys

		SSAA	SW	NATS
Oliver Fox	King's College	1	3	13
Matthew Dickinson	King Alfred's	2	2	44
Joe Walton	Richard Huish College	3	dnf	69
Philip Bridge	The Park	4	14	155
Ben Hawkins	Richard Huish College	6	22	172
Fabien Marchand	Cannington College	5	15	176
Henry Willis	King's College	10	20	203
Charlie Martin	Millfield	7	19	208
Max Travers	Downside	9	25	
Jake Wendon	Millfield	8	dns	
	National Team			15
	SW team		2	2
	C Group team		1	2

