

A word of welcome from our President, Richard Willis (Wandsworth SC)

I would like to warmly welcome you, on behalf of Surrey County ASA, to the Surrey Sports Park (SSP) for the second, full, weekend, of the 2018 Surrey County Age Groups Championships.

We are embarking upon three weekends of intensive competition at SSP, Crystal Palace, and, as a notable first for the County, the London Aquatic Centre. In April, for swimmers who do not have a Surrey County 2018 qualifying time, we will be holding a separate meet, at the Spectrum, Guildford to provide the opportunity for those swimmers to gain experience at high level of competition.

All us of associated with Surrey County were delighted with the election of top referee Mrs Diane Gamble as 2017/18 President of the ASA London Region. Diane is here this weekend to help me to present medals and trophies.

To qualify for and swim in the County Age Group Championships requires perseverance, commitment and dedication, not only by the swimmer, but also by the families of swimmers. We all appreciate the hard work and time that the coaches put into your swimmers, but the support of the swimmer's family is paramount to a swimmer's success too. So thank you for bringing them here today!

Arranging the championships involves a lot of hard work and preparation from our Competition Committee and the calmly-delivered expertise of Alan Thurlow. Many hours of planning and thought have gone into the galas to ensure that they run smoothly and I am truly grateful to the team for all the arrangements they have made.

A huge vote of thanks also goes to the team of technical officials (in white) and the competition team (in navy shirts), without whose voluntary attendance, goodwill and hard work, none of these meets could happen. Officials have to be licensed to work at the County Meets, and our Officials Organiser Sharon Porter has done a great job to ensure that all sessions have sufficient officials in attendance. Without the right number of licensed officials, the requirements of the license cannot be fulfilled and swimmers' times would not be valid for inclusion on the ASA rankings or for entry into higher competitions. We rely on many officials who no longer have any swimmers involved in competitive swimming, but if all the officials we train each year became licensed and offered one or two sessions every year, this would no longer be such an issue.

Finally, it is a very proud moment for the swimmers, coaches and their families, when they make it to the top and win medals and trophies, but the rest of you taking part that matter to us too, and we want you continue to enjoy your swimming, long into the future, and go on to become the next generation's masters swimmers! May I wish you all a very enjoyable day and the very best of luck for every swimmer taking part today too!

I look forward to seeing you all next week too at the London Aquatics Centre.

Richard Willis

President, Surrey County ASA