



History of the St George District Athletic Club

Compiled by Michael Gentle

Dennis Jolliffe

Life Member



Dennis Jolliffe joined the St George District Amateur Athletic Club in April 1951 as a 13 year old.

With 63 years as a member, Dennis still competes in cross country races at Scarborough Park on most Saturday afternoons during winter. Throughout this time he has also worked tirelessly behind the scenes, performing many official duties for the benefit of all athletes.

Dennis' official positions within the Club include:

- Executive Committee 1964-2013
- Hon. Treasurer 1964-2013
- Senior Vice President 1996-2013
- Vice President 1974-1978; 1984-1995
- Hon. Distance Race Secretary 1955-1959
- Assistant Distance Secretary 1984-1985
- Distance Selector 1985-2010
- Distance Handicapper 1985-2008
- Timekeeper 1991-2013
- Starter 2005-2010
- Distance Judge 1958-1961
- Track Captain 1962-1965
- Track Vice Captain 1956-1961
- Track Selector 1964-1965
- Social Committee 1957-1965
- Costume Steward 1960-1962
- Delegate to Interclub Board 1965

Dennis competed in the 1951 Cross Country Season and was awarded the trophy for the most improved Juvenile (under 15). In the same year he started track and field at Hurstville Oval, and in 1952 competed in the Under 16 competition at the cinders track at Sydney Athletic Field. He continued competing in the winter and summer competitions over the next few years, and when he turned 16 competed immediately in A grade in the high jump, long jump and triple jump. In the Sub Junior (under 17) cross country one mile State Championships at Carlingford he was placed third.

At 18 he decided to concentrate on jumps instead of cross country running, but continued to be associated with the winter competition by acting as race secretary for a number of years. At

this time he also suggested that a combined Social Committee be formed with the St. George District Women's Amateur Athletic Club and was Treasurer of this committee for about 8 years. The Social Committee organised picnics, social outings, beach parties, dances, car rallies, hiking trips and an annual formal ball.

He found it difficult to find time for training, as he had a full time job at the Australian Taxation Office and was attending lectures part time four nights per week for a Bachelor of Economics Degree, travelling everywhere by public transport. Triple Jump Olympian Jack Metcalfe held a Sunday morning coaching clinic at the Sydney Athletic Field and Dennis found the advice given there to be invaluable. There were also difficulties in competition. The Club had no high jump landing bags for training purposes and for the first few years the high jump landing at Interclub consisted of a sand pit. The cinders track had to be watered and rolled before competition each Saturday, but this was of no benefit for triple jumpers as pot holes quickly appeared where jumpers landed on their hop and step in competition. There were many sprained ankles and bruised heels.

Despite these difficulties, Dennis became State Champion in the triple jump and represented NSW at Australian Championships in Melbourne, Brisbane and Hobart.

Dennis graduated from Sydney University in 1963 and also became a qualified accountant. At the same time he left the Australian Taxation Office and commenced work in the Australian Bureau of Statistics, specialising in Government Finance Statistics. On 1 January 1964 he became Treasurer of the Club; a position he held until June 2013. It was about this time that Athletics NSW changed the venue of the Under 16 track and field competition from Sydney Athletic Field to Erskineville Oval, and Dennis juggled the job of organising the Club's under 16 athletes at Erskineville Oval with his competition at Sydney Athletic Field.

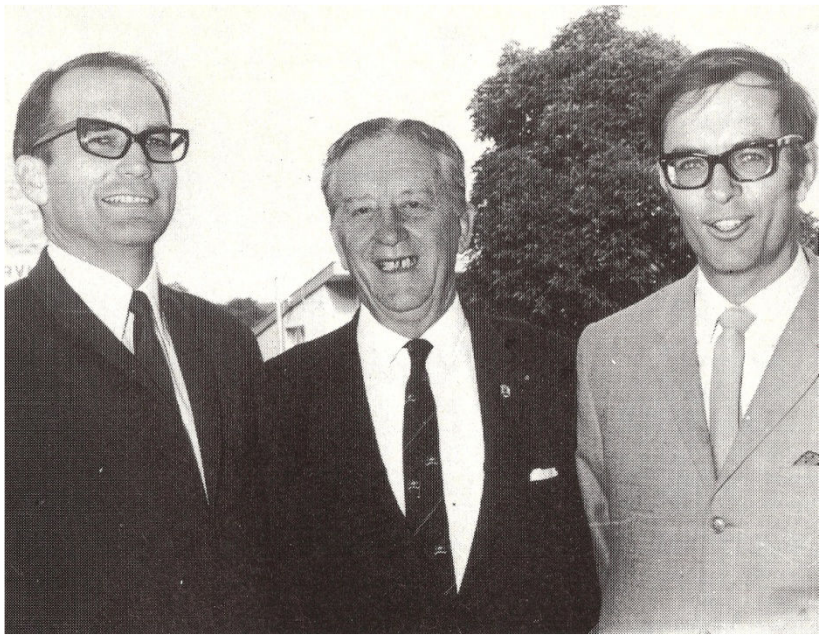
In 1965 Dennis married Adrienne and at that time relinquished his duties as Treasurer of the Social Committee. He still found time to compete in the Track and Field summer competition and acted as an official in the winter season.

1970 was a notable year. In December while competing in a 100m high hurdles interclub race at Hensley Athletic Field, Dennis snapped the achilles tendon on his right leg while leading between the 4th and 5th hurdles. He had an urgent operation just before Christmas to tie the two ends of the tendon together. This was the end of 18 years of track and field competition. It was six months before he could walk without a limp.

Recovery from the injury was slow, and nine months after the operation, a slow jog over 1 km resulted in the limp recurring. It was at this time that the first City to Surf race was held.

Inspired by the performances of several of the competitors he knew, Dennis resolved to run in the 1972 race. As part of his efforts to regain normal running ability he participated in cross country races at Scarborough Park, gradually increasing training distances to 14 km. His time for his first run in the City to Surf was 72:12, but he was glad just to have completed the event. In subsequent races, his times improved and he completed 14 consecutive races with times under the hour, with his best time being 54:55 at age 43.

In 1971 Dennis was made a Life Member of the Club, together with Denis Wilson and John Bowers.



Above: Dennis Jolliffe (right) with Dennis Wilson & Alleyn Gainsford, 1970's.

With four children under 4 at the end of 1972, Dennis confined his athletic activities to cross country running and acting as Club Treasurer. As his children reached 12 years of age, he encouraged them to run in Club cross country events for a number of years.

In the late 1980s, the handicapper of the Intermediate Division suddenly left the Club, so Dennis took over handicapping this event on a temporary basis. This subsequently became a permanent activity, and over a number of years, Dennis developed computer programs for handicap calculations.

In 1993-94, Dennis went to Tonga for three months to assist the Tongan Government to bring its Government Finance statistics up to date so that the government could qualify for assistance from the International Monetary Fund. While over there he made contact with the Tongan athletics team and in the following year a number of Tongan athletes visited Sydney and joined the St. George Club.

During the late 1990's the Club's financial records and registration records were moved from paper systems to computer records. These were subsequently improved and in 2003-04 the registration system was rewritten to create pre-printed ANSW registration forms and Club summary registration sheets. The handicap system was also rewritten to automatically produce several different results sheets quickly after each race. The Club was awarded a \$2,000 Telstra Development Grant for Planning in 2004-05 in recognition of this work.

Though significantly slower than he was, Dennis is still running in Division 2 cross country events and enjoys the competition. In 2003 he won the over 65 10 km State Championship Road Race.

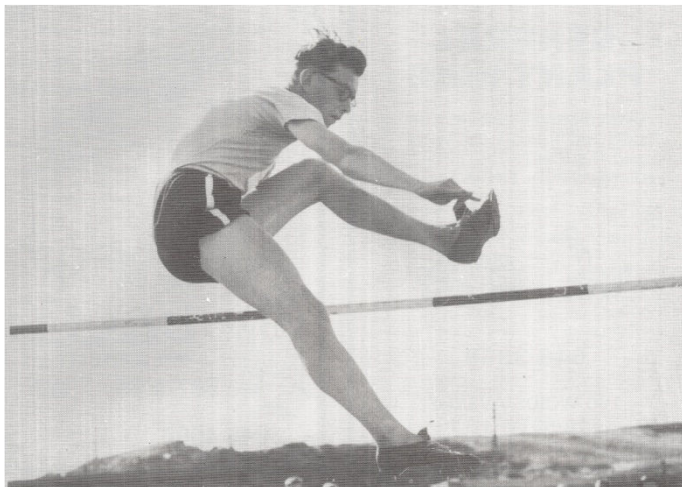
Awards

- 2006 – Commonwealth Sporting Achievement Award
- 2006 - Athletics NSW Life Membership
- 1971 - St George District Athletic Club Life Membership

Personal Bests

High Jump (Scissors style)	5ft 10in	(1.78m)
Long Jump	21ft 10½in	(6.67m)
Triple Jump	47ft 10½in	(14.59m)

Dennis used the 'scissors style' for his high jumps as the 'Fosbury Flop' used today had not been invented, and the lack of adequate landing facilities meant the the 'straddle' and 'western roll' styles were too dangerous.



Above: Dennis Jolliffe, 1954 All Schools 1.65m High Jump

Further Reading

The club website has many documents pertaining to the history of the club available for download in pdf format: <http://www.sgdac.org/?p=Archives>

The club website has detailed results of club events, open handicap events, track & field events, and State, National and International Championship events featuring club athletes from 1921 onwards: <http://www.sgdac.org/?p=Event&page=1>

Summary of Dennis Jolliffe's results: <http://www.sgdac.org/?at=211&page=1>

Please contact the author via webmaster@sgdac.org with feedback, suggestions, additional information, results or resources to help expand and improve these history documents.