

2017 HAMMER CIRCLE REUNION REPORT

By Ian Tempest, Secretary, Hammer Circle.

The latest Hammer Circle Reunion took place on 7-8 October at the Costello Stadium track in Hull. The Hammer Circle is the Association of British Hammer Throwers and was established in 1952 to promote and develop the event.

The Reunion is a mix of social events, awards and a range of keen competitions. Nearly a hundred athletes, coaches, parents and enthusiasts attended the 65th annual event.

This year the British Athletics Supporters Club (BASC) sponsored the U17 competitions which were won by Shaun Kerry (60.53) and Tara Simpson-Sullivan (60.89) two of the country's leading age-group throwers. The support of BASC is greatly appreciated by the Hammer Circle, which comes as part of their programme of supporting grass roots athletics, especially young and up-and-coming athletes.

There was also a UK leading mark for 2017 in the women's under 23 age group for Kayleigh Presswell at 59.38 and a fine throw of 61.38 by guest competitor Myra Perkins of Scotland.

The Reunion also featured an outstanding talk by 2016 Olympian and Scottish record holder Mark Dry on his experiences as an international athlete, and a number of awards were presented for achievements at the Reunion and during the season, including two special awards - for Volunteer of the Year to Rob Careless and for outstanding services to hammer to Paul Head.

After the completion of Peter Aston's three-year term of office, Alan Woods has been appointed as the new President of the Hammer Circle.

Many thanks to everyone who participated and assisted in making the event such a success, particularly Diane and Dave Smith, the stadium staff at Costello Stadium and many other colleagues.

The 2017 UK Hammer season

The 2017 Reunion marked a momentous year for UK hammer throwing. The many highlights include:

For the first time ever Britain had top eight finalists in both the men's and women's hammer at a senior global tournament. Nick Miller's sixth place is the best men's result in global senior hammer throwing since Malcolm Nokes won bronze at the 1924 Olympics, and Nick had thirteen competitions over 75 metres this season. Sophie Hitchon, though disappointed with her seventh place, remains a true world class performer with seven competitions over 70 metres in 2017. Nick and

Sophie, both coached by Tore Gustafsson, contributed 18 points towards GBR's score in the European Athletics Championship Super League in Lille.

In the younger age groups Taylor Campbell (4th in the European U23s) and Jake Norris (6th in the European Juniors) both set personal best throws and are top ten world class in their age groups. Both the men's and women's hammer showed an unprecedented depth of performances this year, giving opportunities to build up the senior and U23 standards even more in future. To that end, the Hammer Circle, in conjunction with England Athletics and donations, supported the participation of nine U20 athletes in a competition in Leiria, Portugal in July.

In 2017 the women's U20 age group showed very close and competitive standards, with the best ever depth of results, and there were big throws in U17/U15 lists (men and women). There was also a women's U13 record for Lily Murray at 47.10

At the IAAF World Championships, it was great to see the enthusiasm of the crowd for the hammer events as maintaining the event's profile is important at this time of constant change in athletics. The Hammer Circle was pleased to see hammer throwing included in the Birmingham Diamond League (though the event remains excluded from the main competitions) and Jake Norris's formidable throwing encouraged the organisers of the English Schools Championship to put his final on in the main arena, rather than outside.

The Hammer Circle works closely with England Athletics and UK Athletics on rules and health and safety issues, and on competition opportunities