



Garden City Runners News Release

7 January 2024

Please send reports of races and milestones, with photos if available, before early Sunday evening for (almost) guaranteed inclusion, to results@gardencityrunners.org.uk

Herts County XC Championships



Above: GCR's women's team ready to go at the Herts XC champs

A hardy band of GCRs travelled to St Albans' Verulamium Park to compete in the Herts Senior XC champs on Sunday. The women's race, an 8.4K course around the park, set off at 12.30, closely followed by the men's 10.8K race at 1.15pm. The day dawned bright but with a bitter wind, although the course was not as muddy as feared and to our knowledge no shoes were lost in the mire. **Lizzie Parry** was first GCR woman in 15th place; **Martha Hall** was 23rd, **Zoe Stephens** 27th and **Sarah Durston** completed the women's A team in 51st place. Also running for the ladies were **Rebecca Barden**, in 57th place; **Sophie Packman** in 58th, **Lucy Iles** in 61st and **Nikki Cowen**, who delivered a strong performance around the first lap but had to retire early due to illness.



Above: the men's team looking cheery despite freezing temperatures at the start

For the men, **Bradley Birch** was first GCR home in 12th place; captain **James Huish** was next in 22nd place; **Chris Baylis** came in 27th; **Thom Buzzard** in 53rd; **Grant Chapman** in 58th; **Chris Jones** in 65th; **Nick Summers** in 71st; **Andy Holt** in 81st; **Dom Thomas** in 86th and **Russell Casey**, who despite starting five minutes' late, managed to make up ground and overtake several runners to finish 113th.

Well done to everyone who raced today, and thank you for marshalling and support **Richard Darley, Sean Bowen, Thippi Rashleigh** and **Tim Cooke**.

Full results are available [here](#).

Welwyn Half



Closer to home, a contingent of GCRs (*pictured above*) took part in the ATW Welwyn Half, which follows a route from Gosling Sports Park, with an out and back down the Cole Green Way to finish in the stadium. **Peter Harvey** reports that it was “a bit windy” and that the course was also a tad overlength. Nevertheless, Peter finished sixth overall in 1:25:18. **Matt Baker** was eighth in 1:26:57, and **Martin Mitchell** ran a new pb to finish 13th in 1:28:52. **Dave Goosetree** ran with **Paul Watts**, and sent this report: “Paul Watts and I ran the Welwyn Half today, with me as guide runner. It was not a super quick time, but today’s run was about getting the first race of the year done, and as we have run this event before, we knew what parts of the course are like, with muddy sections and some narrow paths, so I planned my guiding accordingly - when to walk and when to run. Paul and I were pleased with our chip time of 2:29:38.”

Left: Paul and Dave at the finish

For the ladies, **Sharon Threlfall**, coming back from injury, was pleased with her time of 2:10:47, and **Ann Hayden** finished first in her age group W60 in 2:16:00. Full results are available [here](#).

Stansted Stagger

Ten GCRs (**Andrew Ackrill, Neil Brittain, Kath Evans, Paul Gatens, Nicholas Genever, Peter Jasko, Barbara Kubis-Labiak, Belinda McGinley, Eleanor Sage, Stuart Whitford**) headed over to Stansted Mountfitchet to take part in the annual Stansted Stagger which is a 26 mile trail run known for lashings of mud. **Peter Jasko** sent this report:

"This year the weather overhead was ideal with a smattering of sunshine, light winds and no rain; though the recent heavy rain ensured that the mud was still as slippery and claggy as one expected.



Above: GCRs taking on the Stansted Stagger

Several GCRs (Neil Brittain, Eleanor Sage) used this event as their first ever marathon distance run. Not perhaps the easiest way to break in the legs and body for such a distance. But they all did get round and I'm sure that with the passage of time, they will come to realise that they had an enjoyable run!

Barbara Kubis-Labiak additionally reports:



Above: Colin and Barbara; mud, glorious mud

"**Colin Grace** and I ran the 42km Stansted Stagger trail event, organised by the Long Distance Walkers Association. We both ran it before and it was great to be back on the super muddy trails around Stansted Mountfitchet. It was less eventful than last year when we had freezing temperatures and hail, but the soggy fields didn't disappoint."

Herts Chain Walk

Rebecca Barden and **Steve Ellerd-Elliott** rounded off 2023 with the finale of their latest running challenge, the Hertfordshire Chain Walk, a series of 15 linked loops from Crews Hill, Enfield, in the south, up through East Hertfordshire to the northernmost point, Ashwell & Morden station near Odsey, close by the border with Cambridgeshire. The intrepid duo completed the chain in 7 runs covering 158 km or 98 miles, running the first two links on 23rd October 2022, and finishing with an epic three-link adventure on 31st December 2023. Rebecca reports: "This was a very different undertaking to our previous challenge, the Hertfordshire Way. The Chain Walk is not waymarked and many of the footpaths that make up the links, although marked on the OS map, have been ploughed over or fallen into disrepair, with consequently greater than usual quantities of squelchy mud and some hazardous sections to negotiate."

Above: Steve and Rebecca in Broxbourne Woods, on the first leg of their Chain Walk adventure

Some sections of the Chain passed through familiar running routes to the east of WGC, taking in Broxbourne Woods, Newgate Street, Little Berkhamsted, Letty Green, Panshanger Park and Bramfield Woods, but links 8 onwards, north of Watton-at-Stone, took us into uncharted territory, passing through villages to the east of Stevenage all the way up to the southern fringe of Cambridgeshire, where link 15 runs parallel with the railway line from London to Cambridge. Our final leg, run on New Year's Eve, featured elements that seem to characterise our running adventures: all weathers, from bright sunshine to blustery wind and driving rain; seemingly benevolent farm animals (although there was another rumoured

sighting of Kindness the Killer Horse); varied and intriguing signage; unplanned diversions because of closed footpaths, flooded trails and plain old directional confusion, and even quarry and railway reprises to remind us of our Quarries of Hertfordshire and Lost Railways of Hertfordshire challenges. It was very enjoyable to discover unfamiliar villages and the countryside that surrounds them, and the challenges that the Chain presented only served to remind us how lucky we are in our local (well-kept and well-used) running routes. We ran the Chain two links at a time in figures of eight, meaning that we could make our starting point our finish, and travel in one car each time.

Thanks to Sean Bowen for the loan of his (now out of print) Hertfordshire Chain Walk guidebook. We also used [this website](#) which maps the links on Google Maps, and there is information about the route and useful links on the [LDWA website](#)."

Right: Steve and Rebecca at the finish of their Chain Walk challenge, in Therfield, near Royston

parkrun roundup

103 GCRs prised themselves out of their warm beds to take part in parkruns across Herts and beyond.

At Stevenage, **Caroline Hale** was fourth lady in 21:19. At Panshanger, **Adam Wadley** was third overall in 19:31, **Paul Guy** was sixth in 19:55 and **Matt Baker** seventh in 19:58. At Rushmere, **Rob Casserley** was eighth in 21:40, and at Jersey Farm, **Bruce Judge** was ninth overall in 20:48, while at Westmill, **Chris Baylis** was first into the finish funnel in 19:30.

Full results for GCRs participating in Saturday's parkruns can be found [here](#).

GCR Awards Night – Save the Date

The annual GCR Awards Night has tentatively been set for Friday 15th March. Full details to follow, but please mark your dance card now!

Group Runs - Tuesdays 6.20pm for 6.30pm start, Dance Studio Ridgeway Academy

The group runs are planned to take approximately an hour, the following table gives an idea of the pace. To give variety, especially in the summer, distances will vary a little.

Group/Distance	Pace (mins/km)	Pace (mons/mile)
5k social	A gentle-paced run that would suit those who are still new to running, like a slower pace, are returning from injury or a break from running	
7k	7:30 – 8	12 – 13
8k	7 – 7:30	11 – 12
9k	6:30 – 7	10 – 11
10k	5:45 – 6	9 – 9:30
12k	5 – 5:30	8 – 8:30

Interval Sessions: various locations in Welwyn Garden City, 6:45pm start

Approximately 25 mins of high intensity intervals over distances from 400m to a mile, with rest periods, in various locations in WGC. Runners of all abilities are welcome, pace is dictated by the runners themselves, slower runners will simply do fewer repetitions. Members will be notified of the locations and session format on email and Facebook.

Group Runs – Thursdays 6.30pm Campus West

There are usually three groups as follows:

5k social	A gentle-paced run that would suit those who are still new to running, like a slower pace, are returning from injury or a break from running
Introduction to speed session	A training session for those who are daunted by the track. A mixture of intervals, fartlek and speed sessions. Ideal for those trying to improve their 10k time
Steady Group	Steady group run

Track Intervals – Thursdays 8:00pm Gosling Track

Meet at the track for 15 minutes of warm up activities followed by approximately 30 minutes of track intervals. Sessions comprise laps or multiple laps of the track followed by rest periods. Runners of all abilities are welcome, runners will be formed into groups based on targeted pace.

A reminder to GCRs that there are now parking charges at Gosling Sports Park – this page has details of car parking charges:

<https://www.better.org.uk/leisure-centre/welwyn/gosling-sports-park/gosling-car-parking>

Circuit Training - Homerswood School

For those interested, former GCR member Steve Livingstone runs a very good one-hour circuit training session every **Monday at 6:30pm at Homerswood School**, Kirklands, WGC, AL8 7RF.

The cost is £5 (free for first timers). Five minutes warm up, 40 mins circuits, 15 mins stretching (great for runners). Bring a towel and some water.

Cross Country fixtures:

Please note the dates of Cross Country fixtures, in addition to the Sunday League, over the 2023-24 season:

27 Jan 2024 - Southern Main Champs - Beckenham

24 Feb 2024 - Nationals - Telford

26 Mar 2024 - Herts Vets – Watford

GCR Club Championships

The Club Championships principally consist of races open to the public, although other races may be included as long as they are not hosted by Garden City Runners. The races are ideally chosen from the Avery calendar; however, Race Committee may express flexibility including prestigious events and those facilitating Hertfordshire County Championships. parkruns may be included and should be local.

For 2024 the Championship races are:

Race #	Event	Date
1	Fred Hughes 10	21 st January
2	Watford Half	4 th February
3	Panshanger parkrun	9 th March
4	Flitwick 10k	14 th April
5	St Albans Half	9 th June
6	FVS 3k Relay	End July (tbc)
7	Stevenage 10k	15 th September
8	ATW Hatfield 5	24 th November

The above are subject to change where unforeseen circumstances dictate.

GCR Avery Competition 2024

The GCR Race Committee has produced the calendar of races for the Avery Championship and the Club Championships. Details on all of the 2024 races are below, and these will also be published on the GCR web site, as soon as possible, and on the GCR Facebook group. Please note that the Avery Rules have been simplified by removing the Tiebreaker - in future, joint winners will share the trophy. The club is also creating a new award for the winners of the Club Championships - details will be revealed in the next few weeks. Happy Racing!

Avery Event #	Date	Event	Venue	Cost <i>Registration fees may apply</i>	Status / Notes
1	21 st January	Fred Hughes 10	St Albans	£20.00 aff.	Register here
2	4 th February	Watford Half		£31.00 aff.	Register here
3	18 th February	SXCL Royston (Race #5 of 2023-2024 season)	Therfield Heath, Royston	Free	Club will send out details via email
4 (V)	9 th March	Panshanger parkrun	Panshanger Park	Free	https://www.parkrun.org.uk/panshanger/
5	24 th March	Run Fest at Lee Valley (choice of Half or 10k)	Lee Valley Water Park, Waltham Cross	10k: £26.00 aff. Half: £34.00 aff.	Register here
6	14 th April	Flitwick 10k	Flitwick	£18.00 aff.	Register here
7	6 th May (tbc)	Kimpton Fun Run 10k	Kimpton	tbc	Details tbc
8	Mid-May (tbc)	MWRRL #1	tbc	Free	Club will send out details via email
9	End May (tbc)	MWRRL #2	tbc	Free	Club will send out details via email
10	Start June (tbc)	MWRRL #3	tbc	Free	Club will send out details via email
11	End June (tbc)	MWRRL #4	tbc	Free	Club will send out details via email
12 (V)	End June (tbc)	Welwyn 10k (if going ahead)	tbc	tbc	Details tbc
13 (V)	Start to mid July (tbc; poss. second week)	MWRRL Mob Match	Ridgway Academy, WGC	Free	Club will send out details via email

14	End July (tbc)	FVS 3k Relays	Fairlands Valley, Stevenage	Free	Club will send out details via email
15 (V)	4/11/18 th August (tbc)	GCR Centenary 20.2k	WGC Centenary Route	Free	Club will send out details via email
16 (V)	4 th September (tbc)	Hatfield 5k #2 (Vets)	Hatfield	tbc	Details tbc
17	15 th September	Stevenage 10k	Stevenage	£16.00 aff. (before 31 Dec) £18.00 aff. (from 1 Jan 2024)	Register here
18 (V)	Mid October (tbc)	SXCL #1	tbc	Free	Club will send out details via email
19	20 th October	Stevenage Half Marathon & Marathon	Stevenage	tbc	Register here
20	End October (tbc)	SXCL #2 (poss. Jersey Farm parkrun as back-up)	tbc	Free	Club will send out details via email
21	Start November (tbc)	SXCL #3 (poss. Jersey Farm parkrun as back-up)	tbc	Free	Club will send out details via email
22	24 th November	Hatfield 5	Hatfield	£22.00 early-bird aff.	Register here
23 (V)	Early December (tbc)	Festive 5	WGC	tbc	Club will send out details via email
24	Mid December (tbc)	SXCL #4	tbc	Free	Club will send out details via email

Aff. = affiliated. FVS = Fairlands Valley Spartans. MWRRL = Mid Week Road Racing League. SXCL = Sunday Cross Country League. Tbc = to be confirmed. V = participants can score by volunteering. WGC = Welwyn Garden City

Club Kit

Club kit is available from the Club Kit Secretary Richard Somerset.

We have vests, t-shirts, long sleeve tops and jackets in club colours in all sizes, **and *new* a cosy GCR-branded woolly hat.** See club website for photos. All items are £20 (£19.99 if you pay by bank transfer) except for the hats which are £12 and the jackets which are £42.

You can pay by cash or bank transfer. Please Facebook message or text Richard on 07790 591868 or email rich.somerset@ntlworld.com to arrange pick-up.

"Puffa" jackets are also available for £42, please contact Martha Hall on: ma-hall28@hotmail.com for availability and more details.

GCR Strava Group

If you'd like to join the GCR Strava community, follow this link: <https://www.strava.com/clubs/garden-city-runners>

Join Garden City Runners

Do you live in or near Welwyn Garden City? Like running? Garden City Runners is your local running club. It has over 350 members and encourages participation by all. The club has a varied training programme to suit everyone, from working up to 5 kilometres right through to full marathons. Try a few sessions before joining. Membership is only £20 per year and is available on the GCR website via the new Membermojo platform (note that it is no longer possible to join via the old application form). Simply log into <https://membermojo.co.uk/gcr> and follow the instructions. If you want to know more about the Garden City Runners please contact Sean Bowen (Secretary) or Sue Fletcher (Membership) at gcr@gardencityrunners.org.uk, visit our website <https://www.gardencityrunners.org.uk/> or our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/groups/gardencityrunners/