



Garden City Runners News Release

1 December 2024

Christmas comes early at La Santa

Lanzarote International Running Challenge

Seeking some warmth away from the oncoming British winter a posse of 13 GCRs (and friends) set off for the traditional four-day Lanzarote International Running Challenge in the Canaries.

The object was to run four races in four days, commencing with a 10K road race. **Sophie Packman** finished in 51.17, followed by **Nikki Cowen** (55.54), **Stuart Mann** (59.59), **Chrissy Johnson** (1:02:29), **Sharon Stephens** (1:05:10), **Caroline O'Dwyer** (1:11:58) and **Wayne Aylott** (1:12:46).

The task for Day 2 was a 13K ridge trail run, which again saw **Sophie Packman** come home first in 1:13:59, followed by **Caroline Griffin** (1:22:00), **Nikki Cowen** (1:22:53), **Tom Rogers** (1:28:00), **Chrissy Johnson** (1:29:32), **Sharon Stephens** (1:41:36), **Wayne Aylott** (1:47:13) and **Caroline O'Dwyer** (1:49:48).

Day 3 comprised a 5K beach run with results as follows: **Sophie Packman** (28:02), **Nikki Cowen** (30:21), **Sharon Stephens** (37:39), **Wayne Aylott** (38:45), **Chrissy Johnson** (39:10), **Nayrobis Valencia Aylott** (41:01) and **Tom Rogers** (41:01).



The final day comprised a 21K trail half marathon, with **Sophie Packman** again leading the GCR pack home in 1:49:58. She was followed by **Nikki Cowen** (2.00:38), **Chrissy Johnson** (2:15:17), **Sharon Stephens** (2:25:05), **Wayne Aylott** (2.40:19) and **Caroline O'Dwyer** (2.53:04). **Wayne Aylott** adds that **Wesley de Villiers** and **Ali Mayhew**—colleagues from the Panshanger parkruns—ran with the GCR group.



Winner of the Lanzarote handicap trophy (*pictured right*) was **Chrissy Johnson**.

Gerard's wheelchair marathon around The Emirates



During the first lockdown, **Jane Molloy's** husband, **Gerard MacDonald**, was going stir-crazy without his daily gym visits. As a wheelchair user with chronic back pain (multiple spinal surgeries), his exercise options were limited. He began venturing out in his wheelchair, and with his competitive mentality, built up to a distance of around 15 miles within just four weeks. This was the point that he decided to take on the London Marathon.

Since then, he has done three London Marathons, as well as Brighton and Dublin. And now he's making up his own! On Thursday, in perfect conditions, he completed a marathon around Arsenal's Emirates stadium. With an almost flat and very smooth surface, unimpeded by other runners and walkers, and inspired by the location (he's a Gooner), he smashed his PB by over an hour, completing the 70-odd laps in 3h 50m.

Jane Molloy writes, "I ran a couple of laps with him, plus several in the opposite direction, greeting him every few minutes. He was very grateful for the added support of family and

friends, including GCR members **Delphine Gibbs** and **Karen Atkinson** (the latter's second run of the day!) There was a warm reception at the end from the sixth formers studying Sports Science at Arsenal's community college. Samir from Arsenal was a wonderful host. He guided us at the start, accompanied Gerard on a pedal bike at one stage, and took us on an access-all-areas tour of the Stadium afterwards.



"From the outset, Gerard adopted *Children with Cancer UK* as his charity, and has so far raised over £25,000 for them. This total has been significantly helped by the generosity of my wonderful GCR buddies, to whom I am eternally grateful (as is Gerard). He continues to do fundraising challenges and events, including London Marathon again in 2025, as well as hosting a golf day next June. He is also hoping to do other stadium marathons, including Tottenham and West Ham. I am extraordinarily proud of him," she says in conclusion.

Donations can be made at: <https://2025tcs londonmarathon.enthuse.com/pf/gerard-macdonald>)

Phoenix Christmas Advent Run

On Sunday, **Aiden** and **Nadine Dwyer** (*pictured*) completed the first of their Christmas themed runs, a half-marathon at the Phoenix Christmas Advent Run. "It certainly was a bleak day down at the Thames," writes Aiden, "but everyone was in good spirits; the aid station had a festive makeover with a Christmas tree and there was a great choice of Christmassy medals to pick from. Every runner also received a chocolate advent calendar—a great start to our festive running events."



Run Rudolph Run

Gail Munro reports: "Today a group of GCR's ran the Rudolph 5K to raise money for the amazing Rennie Grove Peace Hospice in St. Albans. This comprised **Peter, Brian, Rob, Debbie, Thippi, Emily**—with her children **Leola** and **Ethan**—and myself.

"Rain stopped just in time for the warmup. The run started in the High Street leading to a nice out and back. We finished the morning at Thippi's restaurant for brunch."



Brian's quirky Scrubs parkrun

Brian Robbins writes, "On Saturday I had to be in Acton Town at 12pm for work ... perfect opportunity to go in early and do a parkrun in West London. Gunnersbury Park would be the obvious choice as it's just a 10-minute walk from the station but I was looking for something a little quirkier. So I decided on Wormwood Scrubs.

"A 20-minute bus ride to Shepherd's Bush and 10-minute walk between the prison and the hospital was a patch of wasteland ('The Scrubs '). All on grass and mud (mostly mud)



this is not a parkrun to get a PB. Only 77 hardy souls turned up and schlepped around in mediocre time. The views were interesting if you



like 30-foot high brick walls on one side and a barren wasteland on the other. I'm glad I went and did it as it is unusual but I got the dreaded 'Unknown' on the results page so officially I wasn't there. So I'll have to go back and do it all again, maybe in the summer.

Pacers at Panshanger parkrun

On Saturday Garden City Runners provided pacers for Panshanger parkrun, on a challenging muddy first 1K of the course the pacers did an excellent job of bringing the runners in on their allocated times.



The pacers were **Martin Mitchell** (20 minutes), **Jess Timmins** (22 mins), **Richard Somerset** (24 mins), **Michael Germain** (26 mins), **Katharine Farrell** (28 mins), **Sid Valentine** (30 mins), **Aiden Dwyer** (32 mins), **Lee Wood** (34 mins), **Thippi Rashleigh** (36 mins), **Andrew Henderson** (38 mins) and **Tendy St Francis** (40 mins).

parkrun roundup

Just over 100 GCRs participated in weekend parkruns. Some of the achievements that stand out are as follows. **Dave Heal** scored a course PB at Gorleston Cliffs in 32:05. Running in Southampton, GCR chair, **Sean Bowen** finished just outside 20 mins (in 20:18). Meanwhile, over in Oxford **Dan Pudner** ran 18:40 to finish 7th overall; **Alex Smith** took part in Brueton and finished a highly commendable 6th in 18:40, while in Worcester **Matt Baker** crossed the line in 19:38, earning him 9th place. Closer to home at Stevenage **Zoe Stephens** completed the course in 20:50, while **Lauren Potter** PB'd in 31:52. **Tom Wackett** ran Gunpowder in a time of 19:24, taking him through the finish funnel in 7th place. Down in Cheltenham **Helen Stafford** registered an excellent PB in 22:44 and the evergreen **Chris Eland** finished 5th at Druridge Bay in a time of 20:25. Running sub-20 minute times at our local Panshanger course were **Graeme McSorley**, who finished 7th in 19:33, and three places behind was **Martin Mitchell** (19:55)—see *Pacers story above*. Other notable times were **John McDowall's** PB in an excellent 21:03 and likewise for **Jessica Plant**, who PB'd in 21:46. Others who PB'd at Panshanger include **Matthew Rennie** (22:24), **Daniel Follon** (22:28), **Daniel Hitch** (22:35). Down in Melksham the ever-dependable **Jamie Rose** finished 2nd in

19:47 and **Alex Faulkner** was second lady through the funnel in 23:33 while over at Jersey Farm another of GCR's Mr. Dependables, **Paul Guy**, finished 3rd in 19:26.

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

Festive 5: Call for volunteers

Although most of the marshal points have now been allocated, **Peter Harvey** still requires volunteers for next Sunday's traditional Festive 5, largely to put up signage. Anyone with time available should contact him at peterharveyone@gmail.com

Bedraggled end to walking season

The loosely conceived GCR Walking Club completed the year with a muddy 8-mile-plus trail walk from The Plough at Sleafshyde to the other side of London Colney, diverting the route in view of the treacherous, waterlogged conditions.



Avery Cup 2025

The Race Committee is delighted to confirm the events for the Avery Cup & Club Championships for 2025. The files will be uploaded to the GCR website shortly but are also available on the GCR Facebook page for download, writes **Jacqui McCallum**, adding, "We hope you all enjoy the range of races we have included and we wish all GCRs a very happy year of running in 2025."

GCR Avery League 2024

Meanwhile, details of all of the 2024 races are below, and these will also be published on the GCR website 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. 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.	Completed
2	4 th February	Watford Half	Watford	£31.00 aff.	Completed

3	*cancelled*	SXCL Royston (Race #5 of 2023-2024 season)	Therfield Heath, Royston	Free	--
4 (V)	9 th March	Panshanger parkrun	Panshanger Park	Free	Completed
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.	Completed
6	14 th April	Flitwick 10k	Flitwick	£18.00 aff.	Completed
7	6 th May	Kimpton Fun Run 10k	Kimpton	tbc	Completed
8	15 th May	MWRRL #1	Stevenage	Free	completed
9	23 rd May	MWRRL #2	Ware	Free	Completed
10	4 th June	MWRRL #3	Royston	Free	completed
11	27 th June	MWRRL #4	Trent Park	Free	completed
12 (V)	30 th June	Welwyn 10k	Panshanger Park	tbc	completed
13 (V)	10 th July	MWRRL Mob Match	Ridgway Academy, WGC	Free	completed
14	18 th July	FVS 3k Relays	Fairlands Valley, Stevenage	Free	completed
15 (V)	4 th August	GCR Centenary 20.2k	WGC Centenary Route	Free	completed
16 (V)	4 th September	Hatfield 5k #2 (Vets)	Hatfield	tbc	completed
17	15 th September	Stevenage 10k	Stevenage	£18.00 aff.	<u>completed</u>
18 (V)	13 th October	SXCL #1	Cheshunt	Free	completed
19	20 th October	Stevenage Half Marathon & Marathon	Stevenage	tbc	<u>completed</u>
20	27 th October	SXCL #2	Royston	Free	completed
21	3 rd November	SXCL #3	Trent Park	Free	completed
22	24 th November	Hatfield 5	Hatfield	£22.00 early-bird aff.	completed
23 (V)	8 December	Festive 5	WGC	tbc	Club will send out details via email
24	15 December	SXCL #4	Stevenage	Free	Club will send out details via email

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. Those attending by car are asked to **park in the school car park (Herns Lane)** and not the Sports Centre car park (Appletree Way).

Group/Distance	Pace (mins/km)	Pace (mins/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 – 6:15	9 – 10
11k	5 – 5:30	8 – 8:30

Hill Reps – Tuesdays 6:30pm

Hills on Tuesday 26th November - Monkswood

Can meet at Campus West 18.30 & jog up there (2KM) or meet at Monkswood 18.45

4 x 90 second efforts
2 x 60s
4 x 90s

Regroup & start each rep together

Running on road, pls bring headtorches & high vis

Looking ahead -

Tuesday 3rd December we will be combining with Martha's intervals

From Tuesday 10th we will be trialling Hills in the afternoon - 12.30 start for around an hour and we can do off road in the daylight. We will still be doing Tuesday evening as well for those who can't make lunch time.

These sessions will be open to all members of the club at all paces and are a good way to improve your overall stamina and performance.

You may require a sports watch or timer but if you have not got either of these do not worry, you can still come and join in the fun (please see Sid or Dom for the definition of 'fun').

Please be sure to wear bright clothing and or head torches.

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

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 6:20pm for 6.30pm start, Campus West

Thursday group run meets at Campus West on the steps outside the library. The What3Words location for the start is for start location: <https://w3w.co/eager.bliss.stuff>.

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
7-8km	Route to take approximately an hour
9-10km	Route to take approximately an hour
Introduction to intervals	This is often time-based intervals rather than distance

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.

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. See club website for photos. Vests, t-shirts and long sleeved tops are £21 jackets 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/

Please send reports of races and milestones, with photos if available, before 7pm Sunday evening for (almost) guaranteed inclusion, to results@gardencityrunners.org.uk