



Garden City Runners News Release

2 June 2024

Sean Bowen's blueprint for GCR's future

New chair takes over from Jane Molloy



Breaking from convention, this week's newsletter puts the spotlight firmly on GCR's new chair, **Sean Bowen**. In the following interview, he states how surprised he was to be invited, and sets out how he plans to steer the ship.

Sean admits to having missed the entire discussion about Jane's desire to step down after arriving late for a committee meeting. "It wasn't until shortly before

the meeting after that I learnt my name had been mentioned seriously as a successor—and you could have knocked me down with a feather."

Did he jump at the opportunity? "Certainly not," he exclaimed. "I had to do some serious thinking—but it was very close to the AGM, and I knew I had to make a decision. I asked questions of a few key people, and the idea began to make a bit more sense."

For all the shock of being asked, Bowen was an obvious contender. He has been a club member for more than 31 years—joining back in September 1992 when the club was branded 'Garden City Joggers'. When I joined GCR 12 years ago and soon met Sean I instantly recognised two qualities: he was encouraging, and consummately inclusive: it was evident that GCR was the antithesis of an elite running club. When I became run leader, in the days when we met at Gosling, he always took a genuine interest in the routes I had planned ... and that culture and ethic has travelled with him to this day.

Sean Bowen knows he is inheriting a club in extremely good health. "The tone at the AGM was very upbeat. The financial situation is good, membership situation is good, there are no black clouds hanging over the club.

"One thing that's particularly encouraging is that we're currently top of Division 2 in the Midweek League although it's a lot more competitive than that would suggest.

"But to me the GCR event I attended two days ago was the 4 x 400 relay on the track, and that to me demonstrated everything that's really great about Garden City Runners, and showed a club that's really thriving. **Richard Sidlin** had wanted to test out a relay event because he had been asked to do timings for this year's Fairlands 3K relays. He suggested a 4 x 400 relay and I thought this was a great idea.



"Seeing such a big contingent of Garden City Runners right the way across the speed range taking part, and also visitors from nearby clubs, such as Stevenage Phoenix, on what had been a grotty day but turned out to be a really nice evening, was fantastic. Everyone was being cheered on ... from **Bradley Birch** who just beaten 2.30 at the Barcelona Marathon to **Willow Gibson** coming in to complete the relay team. The fact that she was being cheered with equal enthusiasm is a perfect encapsulation of what the club is about."

So where will Sean's influence now be felt? His reply was typically circumspect. His first goal is to get up to speed with his new role, mindful of the large pair of shoes he has to fill. "As chair Jane had managed to make things tick over really

well in the face of some extremely difficult challenges such as the pandemic years. Although I've been on the committee for donkeys' years, and made contributions, it's quite another thing to make things happen [from the top].

"If I was to come in and say, 'Under the Bowen regime we're now going to do THAT', not only would it alienate a lot of people, but it would be completely counter-productive. So my priority is to ensure continuity. Only once I've got back to where we were under Jane can I start to talk about a vision for the future. For the time being, I want to maintain continuity without doing anything radical."

As to his inheritance, he admits to having fallen on his feet. One of the first people he had consulted was former chair, Bruce Judge. "Bruce said he had been fortunate to be able to handpick his team. Well I'm even more fortunate because I inherit an already hand-picked team. I couldn't wish for a better wing man than [vice chair **Sid Valentine**], but also out of the blue **Michael Scutt** said he was happy to be secretary, so I didn't have that heartache. On top of that, **David, Sue, Charlotte, Markus** and **Sophie** carry on their great work as Treasurer, Membership Secretary, Webmaster, Welfare, and Social Secretary respectively."

And lest we forget, aside from his more bureaucratic role Sean has also been one of GCR's premier runners over the years. Would the new role compromise his race activity?

"Well, I've had a series of injuries, combined with the onset of old age, and so the days of me having five or six days a week training, and everything fits in around that, they're gone. My running is in decline. However, I still intend to be present at all five MWL races and also Greensand [relays]. I will still be an active runner. You are right to say both the captains [**James Huish** and **Hannah Frank**] and their vices are doing a fantastic job. So I can remain enthusiastic in that knowledge without being at the peak of my speed and fitness."

That said, his personal highlights date right back to the old 1998-99 Sunday Cross Country League series when he secured 10th place overall in the XC league. "To finish 10th in the series was absolutely marvellous and I still treasure that memory," he reflects.

"Those that know me know my favourite event is the Round Norfolk Relay and the first time I became team manager for that in September 2012, and put together a team that got round in a fantastic time and broke into the top 20, will also live with me forever."

As for those who have inspired him down the years, Sean put forward several names, including **Peter Game, Steve Livingstone** and **Barry Osborne**. "But if forced to pick a single name, it would have to be GCR Chief Coach **Dave Edwards**—who has been a constant presence and a vital influence all the way. My first ever club run in September 1992 was a Dave track session, and today, he will be accompanying me to the Chilterns where I'm guiding his walking group for the future, drawing on the rich legacy he inherits from outgoing chair, Jane Molloy."

The idea of Molloy stepping down after four years sounds more like the end of a presidential term. From my time in the club I have seen the baton pass between four highly competent chairs, and the club's fortune will unquestionably remain in safe hands with the latest incumbent. Sean Bowen will preserve the rich heritage of GCR, embracing its welcoming values while pursuing, with gritty determination, its ambition to achieve at the highest level.

Jerry Gilbert

Circuit du Sore Legs

Peter Harvey reports on the recent aptly named 'Circuit du Sore Legs' event at Ware's Wodson Park. "This was a 5k/10k/half marathon/50k/6-hour event around a running track," he reports. "Conditions were warm but with no shade on the track and a decent northwest wind down the back straight, personal bests were very unlikely. In addition, dodging slow runners on the bends created extra distance in order to avoid them."

Peter opted for the marathon and paid the price for trying to go under three hours—a milestone which he last achieved 39 years ago. He was on course up to 18 miles with plenty of time to spare but the heat put paid to his attempt. Cramping calves in the last seven miles saw him reduced to a pitiful jog and he limped in straight legged with a 3:12:40 marathon split—good for first place. This was unofficial as his chip did not record three times ... meaning he had to run an agonizing additional three laps. He had severe muscle cramps after the race, a thick layer of salt coating his skin and felt a bit giddy but recovered to cycle home. Peter described it as his 'anus horribilis' ... so we're assuming that's merely a clever Latin pun for 'saddle sore' rather than a misspelling.

SportsShoes Discount

Sophie Packman announces that GCR members **ONLY** now have access to The SportsShoes discount code, which entitles all GCR's **ONLY** to 10% off and free shipping on orders over £50. "May I make it very clear, there are strict terms and conditions to the discount so please read and take note," she says.

"GCR (club) and its members keep the code offline, off social media or any public websites and keep it between club members only. Please understand that we have to be very careful that codes don't leak. Unfortunately, Sportshoes.com have had people misuse the code in the past, which ultimately resulted in them/the club missing out on future codes.

Please do not be that person that ruins it for everyone else! Do NOT share and do NOT post the codes.

June discount code is: RW1582YS5K. This will give 10% off and free shipping on orders over £50. Note that Coros, Garmin, Shokz and Maurten products are excluded from the promotion. <https://www.sportsshoes.com/>

Blenheim Palace Triathlon

Barbara Kubis-Labiak says she had been intending to compete in the Blenheim Palace Triathlon for some time, and this year succeeded. "It so happened that it was to be my 10th



triathlon overall," she says. "I arranged it with some work colleagues, and travelled on Saturday for a 9:40am start. The event was beautifully organised, and the venue itself is stunning and enough to attract lots of triathletes from around the country."

It had been a thoroughly enjoyable event. "The lake swim was brilliant, as the water was so clear, followed by a rather hilly bike ride (266m of elevation for the 20k ride).

"Overall, it was slightly longer than my usual sprint triathlons, as the distance from the lake to the bike was further than I expected." But she managed to complete it in 2hrs. Breaking this down, she said, "I think I managed a PB on my swim (22mins), bike ride was 55:20, and the

5.5k run was 31mins." Congratulations to her.

Hatfield Broad Oak

It's always good to receive activity reports from new members. Having recently joined GCR, **Daniel Follon** only started running 10k's in May 2023. "But I have started to enjoy them this year and have ventured to 10 miles once this year at Salisbury. I've been doing 5k parkruns since 2015 and have now completed 254 at 51 different locations," he says.

Daniel ran Hatfield Broad Oak 10k on Bank Holiday Monday. "My gun time was 48:40, and was placed 254 out of a field of 1058," he says. "It was the first time I had run there. The first 1k was fine but I found 2k - 5k had a lot of uphill and inclines. The second half of the run was a lot more enjoyable; a really nice route and the run was well supported with lots of people attracted to the site as part of the festival they had on. I'd recommend the run."

'Consider Cork Conquered'

Four intrepid GCR ladies—**Sarah Durston, Gail Munro, Chrissy Johnson** and **Caroline O'Dwyer**—travelled to Cork for the Cork Marathon, racing in the 10K and HM on Sunday with a



gentle warm-up at Glen River parkrun on Saturday, where they say they were met and cheered on by the most cordial locals they had ever been so lucky to meet.

"The Emerald Isle was in its glory, basking in sunshine," they say. The parkrun Chrissy finished 1st (in the

35+ age group) Gail 1st (60+) Sarah 2nd and Caroline 3rd (55+).

Moving on to the main event, Sunday dawned blue and sunny. Gail and Sarah started 10K at 8.45am with Caroline and Chrissy left chomping at the bit until the HM start time of 10.15. All races were started by the exuberant Mayor of Cork with words of encouragement on another hot sunny day!

Sarah completed the 10km in 49.41 (3rd in her age group!), Gail finished in 59.37, super times by both especially in the heat, and a great result with over 3,500 runners!

Not to be outdone, in the HM, Chrissy recorded an incredible time at 2:21:28 and Caroline in 2:55:47, an extremely tough race in the heat of the day.



A special parkrun

Valerie Levison (pictured right) reports her most special parkrun ever.

"I had the privilege of running Roundhay with both my sisters. It was my eldest sister's first parkrun—and the bug has now bitten," she says.

parkrun roundup

More than 100 GCR members participated in parkruns this weekend.

Sifting through the results, the following stand out. At Panshanger, Adam Wadley finished 10th in 20:02, while **Justin Swallow** PB'd in 24:02 as did

Ché Cheriton in 31:44. **Rob Cartwright**, who has suddenly turned into bionic man, with his 'Bridge to 10K' sessions, PB'd at St. Albans in 24:54. **Jacqui McCallum**

(37:06) and the presumably demob happy **Jane Molloy** (37:37) engaged in a bit of parkrun

tourism in York. **Nigel Cavill** meanwhile PB'd just outside the 20 min threshold in

Rickmansworth (20:16). Massive congrats to **Jas Newington** who broke the magic 30 min

barrier in 29:54 to earn a new PB. Onwards and upwards Jas! Special mentions to **Richard**

Somerset whose 19:57 earned him 5th place at Beckton, and to **Nicholas Summers** who

broke 20 mins by finishing in 19:23 at Worthing.

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

Club Championships 2024

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	18 th July
7	Stevenage 10k	15 th September



8	ATW Hatfield 5	24 th November
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GCR Avery League 2024

The GCR Race Committee has produced the calendar of races for the Avery League Competition and the Club Championships. Details on 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	£10.00	Completed
8	15 th May	MWRRL #1	Stevenage	Free	Completed
9	23 rd May	MWRRL #2	Ware	Free	Completed
10	New date 4 th June	MWRRL #3	Royston	Free	
11	27 th June	MWRRL #4	Trent Park	Free	Club will send out details via email
12 (V)	30 th June	Welwyn 10k	Panshanger Park	£20.00	Register here

13 (V)	10 th July	MWRRL Mob Match	Ridgway Academy, WGC	Free	Club will send out details via email
14	18 th July	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	Hatfield 5k #2 (Vets)	Hatfield	tbc	Details tbc
17	15 th September	Stevenage 10k	Stevenage	£18.00 aff.	Register here
18a	22 nd September (provisional date)	SXCL #1	Royston	Free	Club will send out details via email
18b (V)	13 th October (provisional date)	SXCL #2	Cheshunt	Free	Club will send out details via email
19	20 th October	Stevenage Half Marathon & Marathon	Stevenage	tbc	Register here
20	27 th October (provisional date)	SXCL #3	Cassiobury Park, Watford	Free	Club will send out details via email
21	3 rd November (provisional date)	SXCL #4	Trent Park	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	15 December (provisional date)	SXCL #5	Stevenage	Free	Club will send out details via email
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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 (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	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.

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 and in all sizes. See club website for photos. Vests, t-shirts and long sleeve 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 (Chair) 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, by **7pm Sunday** evening for (almost) guaranteed inclusion, to results@gardencityrunners.org.uk*