

GOSPORT
GRR
ROAD RUNNERS
Club Newsletter



GRR at Netley 10k
(photo with permission of Suzie Tanser, Flickr: suzie405)

Editor's Note

Tom Reader - GRR Newsletter Editor

Welcome to the latest issue of the increasingly inaccurately-named 'monthly' newsletter (last 'month', we were looking forward to Christmas - now, it's ~~nearly~~ summer). I'm still calling this one the 'Spring' newsletter, as we look back at the many things that have been going on since last time.

We've tried to 'slim down' the newsletter a bit to make it a more manageable read. As you'll have seen, we've moved the 'results' to a separate publication, which hits Facebook and the GRR website soon after the end of every month. However, we seem to have made up for that with a lot of content in this issue - thanks to all contributors. We still had to miss a lot out, and the Summer issue is already under way.

This issue's cover photo is one of my favourites for a long time: The support and team-work of GRR at its finest, this time in the Netley 10K. Thanks to Suzie Tanser (Flickr: suzie405) for her permission to use the photo. Suzie commented "It was a very moving moment - what great support for your last runner!" Well done for everyone who took part in that, and all other events over the last few weeks.

There's a busy few weeks coming up, too - see later in the issue for 'Dates for your Diary'.

See you out there!

Tom

Chairman's Corner

Ken Eaden

Hi All,

It's been a long time since my last post, so apologies, there has been a lot going off.

Firstly, many thanks to all that attended our annual AGM, here is a quick summary of my address to the audience:

It has been a positive year for Gosport Runners, with membership slightly up, I am now in my third year as Chair and my aim is to continue to maintain our core values:

- Encourage Runners to achieve and perform to best of their ability
- Engender Healthy Competition
- Maintain a positive and reciprocal relationship with fellow running clubs.

- Maintain a Community Spirit- Donations to local charities from the surplus monies from the Gosport Half Marathon. In addition, we do an annual foodbank run in partnership with Waitrose.

So what have we achieved the past year?

- Revised our Club Standard awards categories to align with England Athletics and adopt the World Veterans Association standard times. The rationale behind this was to encourage members to achieve and perform. This change enables us to reach out and incentivise the whole membership and at the same time ensure our faster members have challenging targets. This change has had a positive change and sparked enthusiasm to push themselves that bit further.
- We now have two additional England Athletic Qualified Coaches In Running Fitness (CIRFS) and provided opportunity for additional Leaders in running Fitness (LIRF). This gives us more scope and flexibility to improve our club nights. We are already seeing a positive outcome. Our interval sessions have increased in popularity and members are beginning to not be apprehensive about participating. The feedback has been positive with reported significant improvement in 5K times.
- Secured Club Improvement Fund for LIRF Development: We were successful in an application for Club Improvement funding from England Athletics. We were awarded a grant of £500 to hire the services of a top England Athletic Coach to mentor and upskill our coaching team. We recently held a successful coaching seminar with Kerry Newell the EA coach and our coaching team were impressed with the quality of the session. As a result, we have had two whole club training sessions. One interval and a whole club run. Our team are looking at ways to improve and they will be integrated into the club night training.
- Our beginners course have been a resounding success with over 20 participants. The current cohort are coming to the end of their Couch to 5K and hopefully they will become long term members.
- Improved Communication: Feedback from our last members service said we should improve our communication. We have introduced a Whatsapp broadcast to members, also several members have signed up to an events APP called SPOND. This is in addition to Facebook and Email.
- Engagement with Kingfisher- Club Handicaps and GHM: We have developed and continue to foster a relationship with Kingfisher Caravan Park. Last year we held our post GHM there and it proved to be very popular. We also use it as a base for the Summer 5K and Handicaps. Members can enjoy a drink and chat afterwards.

Overall, it has been a good 2024, Our final position in the Hampshire Road Race League and Cross Country League was the highest for several years. Membership is up and we hosted another successful Gosport Half Marathon. We may be a relatively small club compared to our neighbours, but we host the best and biggest Half Marathon on the South Coast - also we strive to deliver a quality experience for our members. I thank the Committee for their enduring support, but more importantly a massive thank you to you the membership for supporting the Yellow Army.

2025 aims:

- Maintain and increase Membership - attract a younger and faster demographic
- Launch new and improved website
- Introduce new kit design
- Continue to foster positive and reciprocal relationships with our neighbouring running clubs. We held a joint 5K recently with 103 participants - this is a testament to how we are viewed by other clubs.
- Review and improve club night experience

Stronger, Faster, Together – The Yellow Army Moves Forward!

2024 was a winning year for Gosport Runners! With rising membership, new coaching talent, and a renewed energy across the club, we've elevated every stride. From smashing personal bests to building deeper community ties, we've proven that passion and teamwork drive results.

We've modernised our training, championed inclusivity, and led with heart – supporting local causes and inspiring newcomers. With record league finishes, a stellar Half Marathon, and a vibrant club spirit, we're not just running – **we're thriving**.

Here's to 2025 – attracting fresh faces, pushing new limits, launching bold changes, and staying true to what makes us great.

This is Gosport Road Runners. Driven by purpose. Powered by people. United in yellow.

Ken

Chairman GRR
Chief Marshal Gosport Half Marathon

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Club News

New Websites and Logo

You'll have noticed by now that we have a new website, both for the Club, and for the Gosport Half Marathon, both featuring our new logo and branding. This is partly thanks to some funding and assistance from Gosport Borough Council and some expert help they provided. Also, watch this space for news of new branded GRR clothing.

EA Coaching Training

The club was recently awarded a £500 grant towards hiring the services of a top England Athletic Coach to pass on skills, knowledge, and ideas to the GRR coaching and LIRF team. This session took place recently, and was a great success - as well as plans for more 'all club' sessions, various suggestions were made for more thorough and varied warm-ups, cool downs, intervals sessions, and other 'whole group' runs.

Mike's Mile

As we now have a marked 400m track right on our doorstep (the Dell of Doom at the Rugby Club), Mike Stares has launched a challenge utilising it: Quite simply, each of us can sign up and do a self-timed mile (4 laps) and note down our times on the chart on the noticeboard at HQ. There is space on the chart for us to do 6 runs, and note whether we improve over subsequent attempts. Please do sign up and have a go - the idea is to see if we improve over the series of runs, not to compare ourselves to others.

Paphos 2025 (and 2026!)

A contingent of GRR made our way to Paphos, Cyprus, earlier in the year, and a very good time was had by all.

I tried to compile a list of people's favourite memories of the time there, but they were mostly of the "you had to be there" variety: *That* toilet in *that* pub, which luckily was more "DIY SOS" than "Trainspotting". And while the buffet in the hotel was excellent, it did include a few surprises: Apples in Mayonnaise for breakfast, anyone? There is a full article later in this newsletter. The good news is that the decision has been made to return in 2026 - the dates of the runs are 7th and 8th March 2026, but most people will go out a day or two earlier. Thanks to Deborah Birch for organising these trips - talk to her for details of next year.

Beginners' Group



The 2025 Beginners' Group (pictured above back in the long, dark evenings of winter) have done really well, led by Karen Harding and her band of LIRFs / CIRFs. As well as the guided C25K sessions (including homework!), the group have already taken part in various other club runs, including the Bluebell Run, Memorial Run, an all-club Intervals session, some other 'all up' runs, and a Time Trial.

Their 'graduation' run has just taken place, where the group - along with many existing GRRs - ran in the sun, then met for medals, coffee and doughnuts at Explorer Coffees afterwards.

Well done to all, and welcome to GRR!



Treasure Hunt

Once again, Mark Jakins put on an excellent Treasure Hunt, and again managed to make it coincide with a perfect early-spring day. 35 or so of us put our detective's hats on and competed (no, sorry - it definitely wasn't a competition - especially as my team didn't win this time) over an off-road course covering areas most of us had never run before, all while solving clues and trying to convince the other teams they'd gone the wrong way. The very finest trophies were awarded to the winning team!

Thanks to Mark for a brilliant event.



Charity Night

Jo Booker organised a fantastic Charity Night, where the recipients of funds from the Gosport Half Marathon come to celebrate with us, receive their cheques, and tell us a bit about themselves. We were also very pleased to be joined by the new Mayor of Gosport - and long-time GRR member - Kirsten Bradley.

The venue this year was the Alverbank Hotel who also provided excellent food, and a nice backdrop for the group photo afterwards! A full write-up will follow in a dedicated Charity Night newsletter later in the summer.

Membership Renewal Time

We're now past the time when hopefully all members have renewed membership, but if not, please do so as soon as possible. Those who have renewed England Athletics membership too are asked to check their profile on the EA website - some membership emails haven't been getting through.

Club WhatsApp Reminder

To receive club news, sometimes at short notice (e.g. cancellations and changes of plan), please make sure you have this number saved in your phone: +44 7392 522662.

Spond

For planning further into the future, please consider downloading the 'Spond' app, and joining the 'Gosport Road Runners Information Page' within the app. It gives invites to all upcoming events, and allows us to reply ('going / not going') so the organisers have an idea of numbers.

Helpers Needed for Gosport Half Marathon

The South Coast's Finest Half Marathon* takes place this year on November 16th, but helpers are needed all weekend. PLEASE sign up to help, either by filling in the survey (link from facebook page) or email chiefmarshal@gosporthalf.org. Many roles are available, including marshalling, filling goody bags, marshalling, giving out race numbers, marshalling, putting up signs, and marshalling. We need a lot of marshals! Please do sign up and help us make this - the 40th year - the best ever.

*according to us :-)

Evesham parkrun

By Marie Bowers



Visiting friends in Worcestershire we stayed overnight in Inkberrow, where I was thrilled to find The Old Bull complete with bunting, St Peter's Church and even Grey Gable surgery! (If you know, you know)

Evesham was nearby and we parked at Viaduct Meadow. £2 for 2 hours but worth it for the posh public loos! There was a row of baby changing stations and those T-shaped all-in-one soap, water, dry taps!

The course started at the "Fish Refuge" ??? No idea what that meant but "ask someone wearing trainers" got the usual friendly help.

After around 300 metres to the start I got there just in time for the welcome briefing. It began with an introduction about Simon de Montfort who died in Evesham in 1265. The Sign Language Support volunteer looked surprised at the history lesson but coped admirably!

The 2 lap course was along gravel paths in one direction, returning on grass. Plenty of space for runners with just two pinch points. The whole run was alongside the beautiful river Avon on a sunny day, really enjoyable.

People were encouraged to use the nearby café afterwards, which offers free parking to parkrunners, so that's what we'll aim for next time.



Marie Bowers

GRR On Tour - Paphos, Cyprus - March 2025

By Deborah Birch



We laughed, we had fun, we had friendship, we ran!

The pictures tell the story but to add to these here is my precis of a fabulous run away break.

We all booked our own flights and chose our length of stay which were either 3,4,5 or 7 nights. Thursday travellers all bumped into each other at Gatwick. Friday travellers happened to end up sitting in rows behind each other on the plane.

The whole team had arrived by Friday afternoon. That evening Malcolm from Running Crazy (the company we used to book the holiday) arranged a fun games night with a quiz and 'speed ball' game. Speed ball turned into friendly competitive competition - but it's the taking part that counts right - and we all took part. I think this evening brought our group camaraderie to the forefront and this camaraderie lasted the whole weekend.

We tended to mix and match what we did over the days with different activities like dipping in the sea, walking to UNESCO Valley of the Kings and watching football in a nearby sports bar. This was aided by a WhatsApp group created once we arrived e.g "We are walking to Valley of the Kings tomorrow if anyone wants to join, meet at 0900 in reception."

Every evening we all met up at 'happy hour' before dinner. Happy hour was great as it included coffee! The table we secured each evening kept extending as the group arrived during the hour. I think the bar staff were great at bringing out the drinks - only once did 2 extra cocktails get delivered to the table which was a pleasant surprise to 2 lovely ladies! We all went to the till as we left and listed our drinks for payment and it all worked out.



We also tended to see each other at breakfast and evening meal. Some of us chose to breakfast inside, some outside and often pulling up a chair for coffee and a chat at outside tables.

The friendship and support in the group was second to none.

Paphos itself and the hotel location were great for coastal walks, souvenir shops, dips in the sea, mint tea and a local supermarket for reasonably-priced Cyprus delight.



Onto the races! These were well marshalled by police and volunteers and well organised. GRR had entries in 10k, half marathon and marathon. I ran the half and although it wasn't too exciting a course it was safe because there were road closures along a dual carriageway with countryside and some coastal

route. It was fairly flat with an incline near the start. There was opportunity to see other GRR runners on part of the course so lovely to cheer each other on and see a familiar face.

Those of us who stayed 5 or 7 nights went on to some sightseeing to Aphrodite's Rock and up into the Troodos Mountains and enjoyed more relaxing in the area.

Hot off the press as I write this is that GRR will be on tour again in 2026 and we are heading back to Paphos as it was such a great destination for us in very many ways. Race day is 8th May 2026 for 10k, half marathon and marathon with a 5k on the evening 7th March.



Deborah Birch

My London Marathon

By Melanie Bagwell

After many years of entering the ballot for London with no success I decided to enter our club ballot one last time, and then on a cold December morning after our Christmas club handicap run, the lovely Pete Lindley picked my name out of the hat, yeah I screamed and there were tears all from pure joy, all while I was dressed as an Elf "I'm Doing the London Marathon"! To say I was happy was an understatement, I honestly didn't think I'd ever run London.

Then 'R' Karen stepped up to the plate, and I will be forever grateful to her because my marathon journey would not have been the same without her, she's my running buddy and one of my best friends, so in a way this is as much my journey as hers, someone referred to us as recently 'The Dream Team' we'll take that.



Karen gave up her Saturdays and I mean every Saturday to run with me, she sorted the training plan and the routes, taking in various sites in and around Hampshire, showing me where she grew up and where her family lived, and all the time these were miles on our legs, it was the best distraction, which is a good because I can get lost going round in a circle, she held me together both physically and mentally.

We travelled up to London on the Saturday and after dropping off our bags off at the hotel, off we went to the ExCel, and this is when it all became very real, to say I was overwhelmed was an understatement, I was lost for words, with everything that has happened to my body over the last 2 years, running a marathon was not on my radar, but here I am, standing in the queue to get my number, then moving onto find my name on the board - I honestly didn't think this day would ever come. I gave myself a talking to and enjoyed the experience.

Race day, and honestly I wasn't nervous at all, I was looking forward to doing it. I'd already decided to take it steady as the weather was going to be warmer than I would have liked, but we can't control it so no need to worry over it. Breakfast done, and all ready to travel to the start, and yes the hubby took control of that! He couldn't come into the runners zone with me so we sat on the grass and I had some more food and drink, we said our goodbyes and off I went to the longest toilet queue ever - it moved pretty quick so that was ok, then off to the bag drop. They called to say my wave was open so I made my way to it, walked around a bit then joined my wave. As we made our way to the start, I remembered Barretts (Sue Barrett) rule, "don't start running until you get to the start line". Running around London was amazing, some bits of it are a bit of a blur. I got to the Cutty Sark and was like "how the hell have I made it to here already"..... Running over Tower Bridge was fantastic, I was halfway there, the atmosphere around the course was amazing, the crowds really did keep you going. I remember dancing to the Y.M.C.A and seeing all the runners around me doing the same was just magical. I have never ran 26.2 miles and smiled pretty much all of the way round.



Seeing the girls on the course, well I should say hearing the girls on the course, that was amazing, I was expecting to see R Karen but not the rest of the girls Lisa, Jo, Karen M, and Deborah: It was so good to see you all.



The last mile before turning onto The Mall, I was having a word with myself "Right there's not a cat in hell's chance I'm walking any of the last bit" so I gathered myself together and off I went again when I heard "GO GOSPORT" only to turn and see my husband - after a cuddle and a cry, I made my way to the finish line with the biggest smile on my face.

Running down towards the finish line was amazing, not only had I completed the London Marathon, I'd finished it in one piece, and I'm still on cloud 9.

Thank you Gosport Road Runners for the support!

Melanie Bagwell



Bluebell Run

By Mark Jakins



Approximately 5 years ago, I was asked if I'd take over the leading of the Bluebell run - our traditional first out of town of the season.

For the years that I'd participated previously, we ran from Hillhead up to the Bluebell woods at Chilling. It was a lovely, local route, guided by Brian. I remember one year, us running back along the shingle of Hillhead beach as the light faded. Amazing!

Unfortunately, when I went to recce that route, I found that the council had closed the woods to the public so we had to find a new destination and fast!

Sue suggested looking at the woods from Laveys lane, which had apparently been used for runs previously. I had never been there, but I went up to check, found the woods and led that year's run from there.

The following year, we used the same route however, it rained the whole day of the run and the woods quickly turned into a quagmire, which led to a pretty memorable run, not necessarily for the right reasons.

Last year, the winter had been so wet, that the best part of the Bluebell Woods weren't accessible due to a ridiculous amount of mud, so we ran for the first time from Whiteley and up into Botley woods using the gravel roads.

After this year's drier winter, I had high hopes of being able to run the route from Laveys lane again, however, on checking, a large amount of forestry work is going on in the woods and many of the paths were closed, which meant that, again, we'd need to find a new route.

I checked out some options using Strava and saw that we could access the woods at Laveys lane from Whiteley, so, after a couple of dog walks, I finalised a route from there. And as luck would have it, I think we arrived at the woods right at the peak of the Bluebell bloom. They were stunning.

It's always a pleasure to plan and lead this run. Even more so when so many club members come and enjoy it. I think that bigger numbers are directly related to the enjoyment of these types of run, they are as much about social interaction as they are about exercise.



Also, from an organisational point of view, it takes the same amount of effort in planning an event whether 5 people turn up, or 50. It definitely feels more worthwhile with bigger numbers though.

I've no idea yet where next year's route will start from, but no doubt there'll need to be a few changes. I'm looking forward to it already.



Hopefully, now that so many of us have enjoyed the first OOT of the year, we can maintain the momentum for the rest of the season's runs, which always come on the last Thursday of the month. There are normally distance options and they are suitable for anyone who can run a 5k.



Mark Jakins

Here Come the Girls - Alton 10

Honor Reader



Alton 10, the race that everyone who'd run it before, gave me *that* look. I believe even Mike Barker laughed knowingly!! I booked up soon after Ryde 10, having talked to a friend from Alton Runners, who was also Race Director for the first time this year....seemed rude not to!

Everyone who had previously run the race described it as hot and hilly. It was, but I strangely really enjoyed it. I love this photo for two reasons - Firstly, the blazing sun at this point in the race was the hardest part, so having company was great! Secondly Tom was nowhere to be seen (or heard!!!). A tough race that I'll definitely do again.

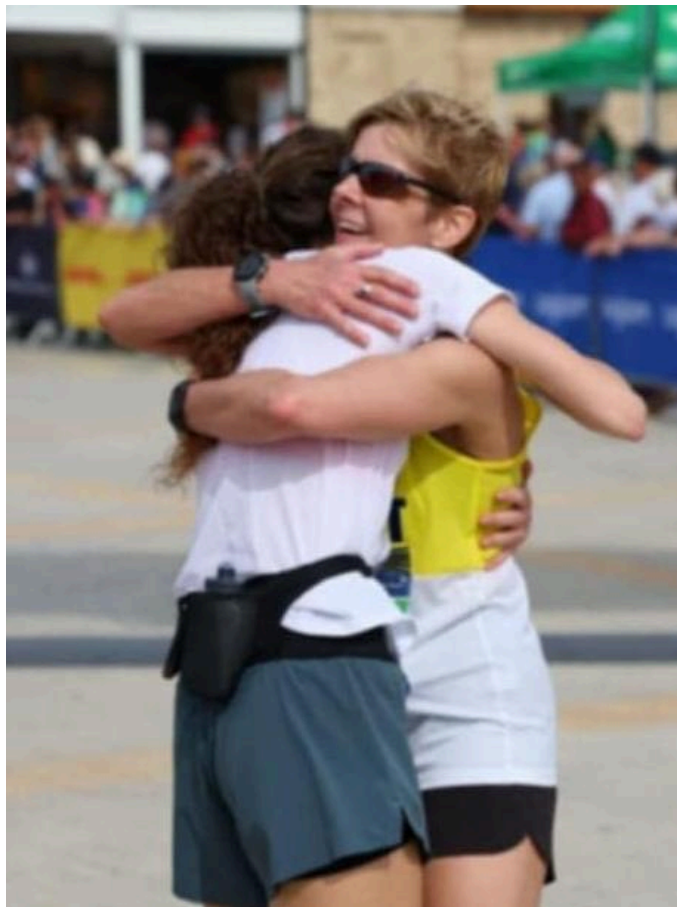
Honor Reader

GRR Camaraderie and Club Times

Sorry for the blurry photo, but I really like this one of Tonia at the end of the Paphos Half, showing the camaraderie with a complete stranger having just run together.

Congratulations to Tonia who achieved her Bronze club time at this run, and several other GRRs who also got club times. I can vouch for the fact that it was very hot (and pretty hilly): a tough course to achieve a club time on.

The photo of me crossing the finish line is - strangely - unavailable...



Dates for your Diary

Club Events

Tuesday 3rd June	7:00pm	Time Trial
Thursday 26th June	6:50pm	Out of Town - Denmead
Saturday 28th June	8:50am	parkrun Tourism - Wickham
Wednesday 9th July	6:50pm	Strawberries and Cream Run - Meon Shore
Sunday 5th October	9:30am	Clarendon Marathon
Sunday 6th-10th March 2026		GRR on tour in Paphos

HRRL Events

Sunday 15th June	Alresford 10k
Sunday 6th July	Lordshill 10k
2025-2026 Season Dates so far...	
Sunday 31st August	Totton 10k
Sunday 26th October	New Forest 10
Sunday 16th November	Gosport Half Marathon
Sunday 1st February 2026	Ryde 10

Other Events

Sunday 8th June	9:30am	Purbrook Ladies 5 Road Race
Sunday 22nd June	8:00am	Naomi House Airfield Run - Solent Airport
Wednesday 2nd July	7:00pm	Portsmouth Joggers 5 mile Cross Country - Queen Elizabeth Country Park
Thursday 3rd July	6:35pm	Stubbington Green Running Club - Inter-club TT
Sunday 20th July	4:30am	Air Ambulance Runway Run - Southampton Airport
		Note: Yes, that's 4:30am in the morning(!)

And Finally... The Devil's in the Detail



*Honor was distracted by Ken's number enough not to notice he needed help putting it on straight!
#numberpolice*

GRR Online...

GRR Website

All Club information relating to official meets and events can be found on the 'events' page of our website, and all members are encouraged to look at this regularly.

Not all details are posted on the Club's Facebook page, so make sure you add the GRR website to your bookmarks list:

<https://gosportroadrunners.org.uk/>

Social Media

The Club's Facebook members' page is very active, and is the main place where Club members share stories, race experiences, photos, arrange out-of-Club meetings, etc. Search Facebook for 'Gosport Road Runners Members page' or follow this link to see what's going on:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1930144613918921>

We are also on Instagram: <https://instagram.com/gosportroadrunners>

GRR Newsletter

If you have anything that you would like to contribute towards future editions, all input is very much appreciated; from brief details of races that you've taken part in, photos that you have taken of Club runners/events, interesting articles that you have come across, funny stories - basically anything that you would find of interest or think other Club Members will enjoy reading!

Please continue to help make this an interesting read and don't leave it all to Tom! It's OUR Club and OUR newsletter.

You can send comments, articles, and any content to us either via Facebook, or by email to newsletter@gosportroadrunners.org.uk