

Annual Report 2024

Eastbourne Rovers Athletics Club

Prepared by Joseph Burge (Chair) on behalf of the management committee



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Chair's Foreword

2024 has been a landmark year for Eastbourne Rovers Athletic Club as we celebrated our 130th anniversary—a remarkable achievement and a reflection of our enduring strength as a community.

Our athletes have delivered outstanding performances this year, from excelling in age-group competitions to representing Sussex at the English Schools' Cross Country and Track and Field Championships. We were particularly proud to see members competing internationally, showcasing their talent while representing England and Great Britain. Beyond competition, it has been inspiring to see the continued enthusiasm of all our athletes to train and strive for personal improvement. Whether preparing for elite competition or simply enjoying the process, our athletes are embracing the health benefits, camaraderie, and personal growth that come with training, becoming the best versions of themselves both on and off the track.

Our Mile Night was a key highlight of the year, attracting enthusiastic participation and positive feedback. It demonstrated the strength of our club and its connection with the wider athletics community. We look forward to building on this success with next year's event, scheduled for May 2025.

None of this would be possible without the dedication of our volunteers. Coaches, Leaders, officials, team captains, and so many others work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure the club runs smoothly and our athletes can thrive. Your efforts are invaluable, and I extend my heartfelt thanks to all of you.

As we look to 2025, the club faces significant challenges, including our commitment to maintaining our aging track, reinstating pole-vaulting facilities, and further improving member engagement and retention. These goals will require careful planning, collaboration, and ongoing support from our members and partners. I am confident that, with the collective commitment and enthusiasm of our club, we will overcome these challenges and continue to thrive.

Thank you for your ongoing support and dedication. Together, we can look forward to another successful year ahead.

Joseph Burge



Membership Facts and Figures

Membership has remained relatively stable at a total of 312, showing a slight decrease from 318 in 2023. This stability is commendable, especially considering the turnover of both leavers and joiners. Efforts to increase membership continue through various advertising channels; however, progress is constrained by full training groups and the current athlete-to-coach ratios. We aim to address these challenges through planned initiatives, including incentives and the strategic use of the England Athletics grant secured for 2024-2025.

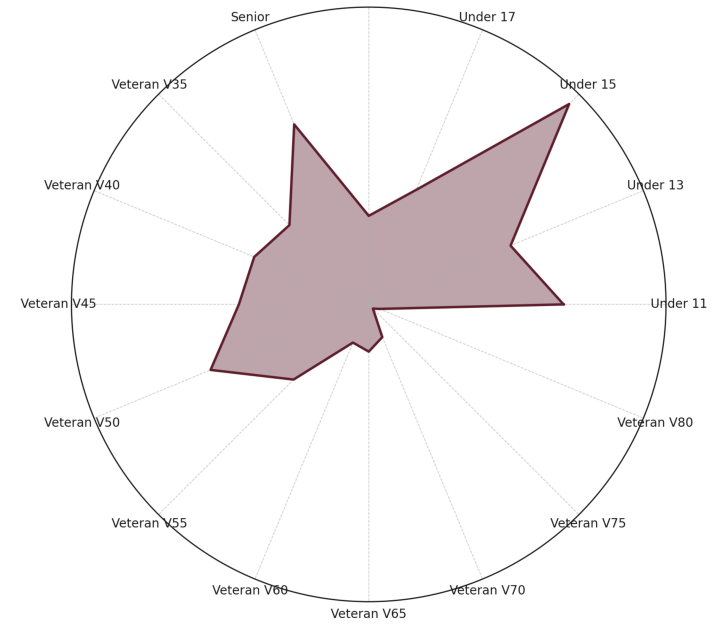
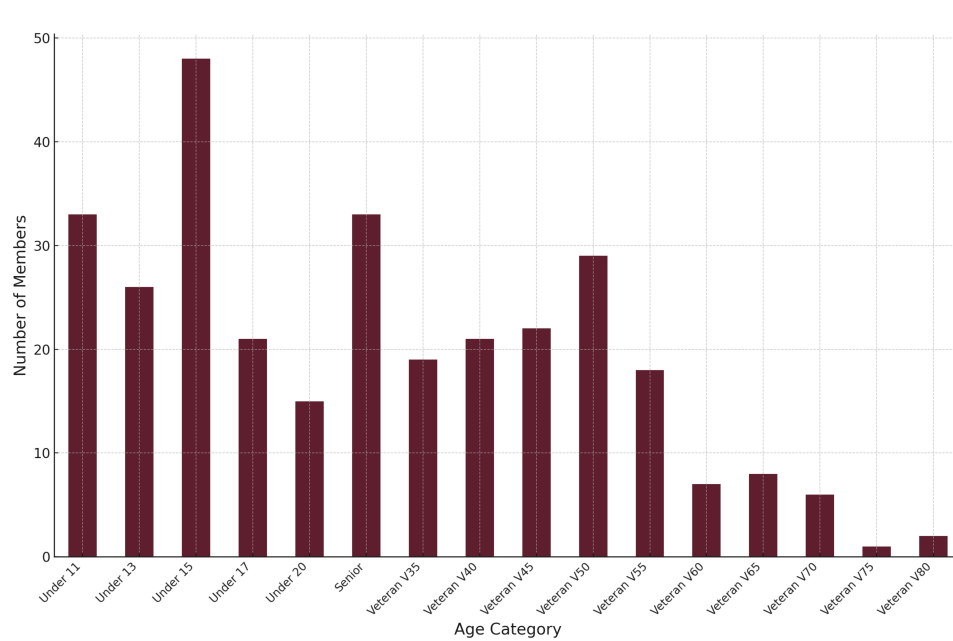
Membership Type	Count
Child Full Membership	112
Adult Road Runners & XC	63
Adult Full Membership	52
Family Full Membership	28
Free Family membership for approved applicants only	11
Committee Membership	9
Couch to 5k - Road Runners	8
Adult Full Membership 2nd claim	5
65+ Full Membership	5
Adult Road Runners & XC 2nd claim	4
Half Membership - for full time uni students or members living 60+ miles away	4
65+ Road Runners & XC	4
Lifetime Members	3
65+ Full Membership 2nd claim	2
Free Adult for approved applicants only*	1
Coaching only*	1



Age Group	Count
0-18	133
19-30	30
31-45	53
46-60	68
61-75	22
76+	3

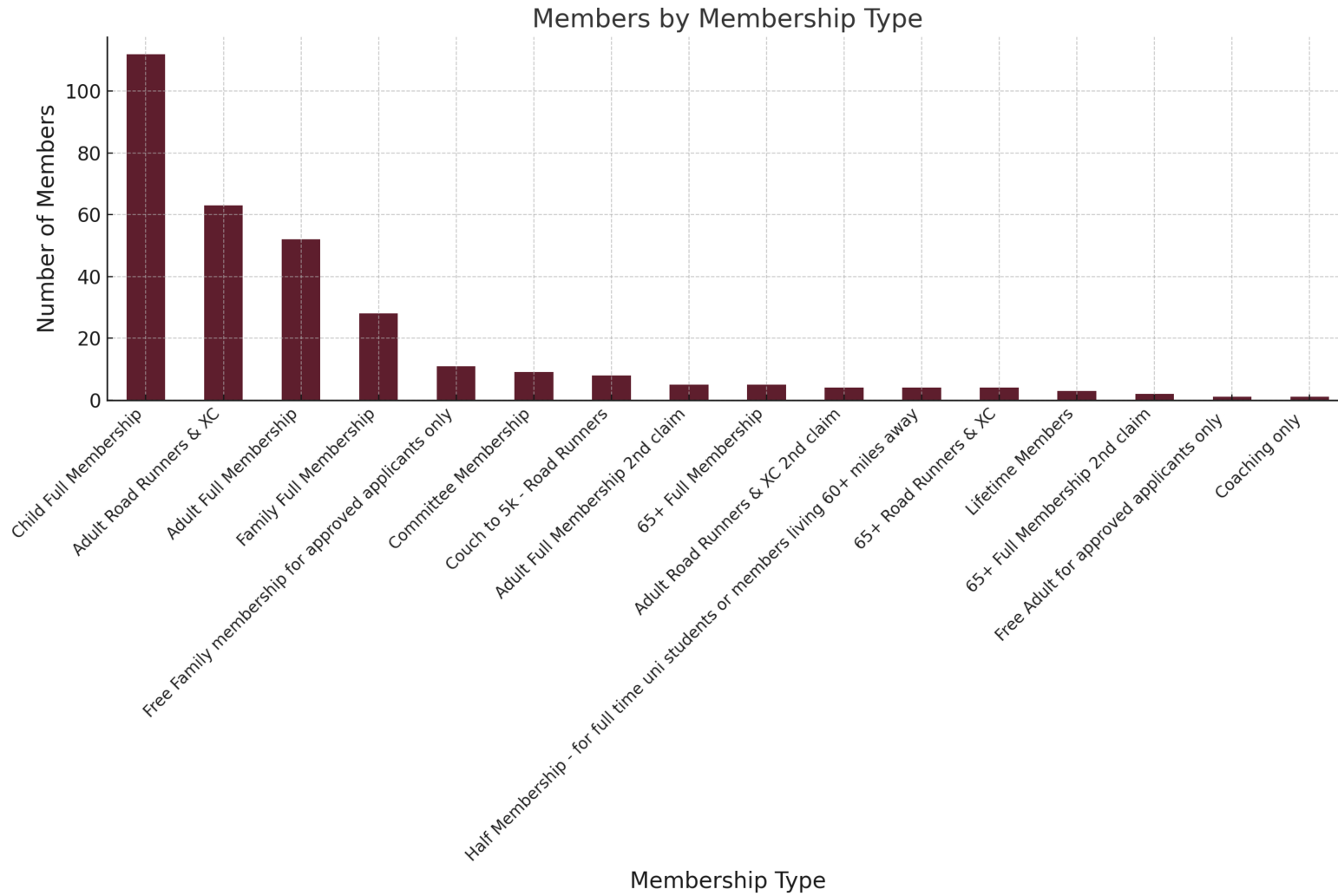
The following graphs are included to provide insight into the composition of Eastbourne Rovers Athletics Club in 2024.

Members by Age



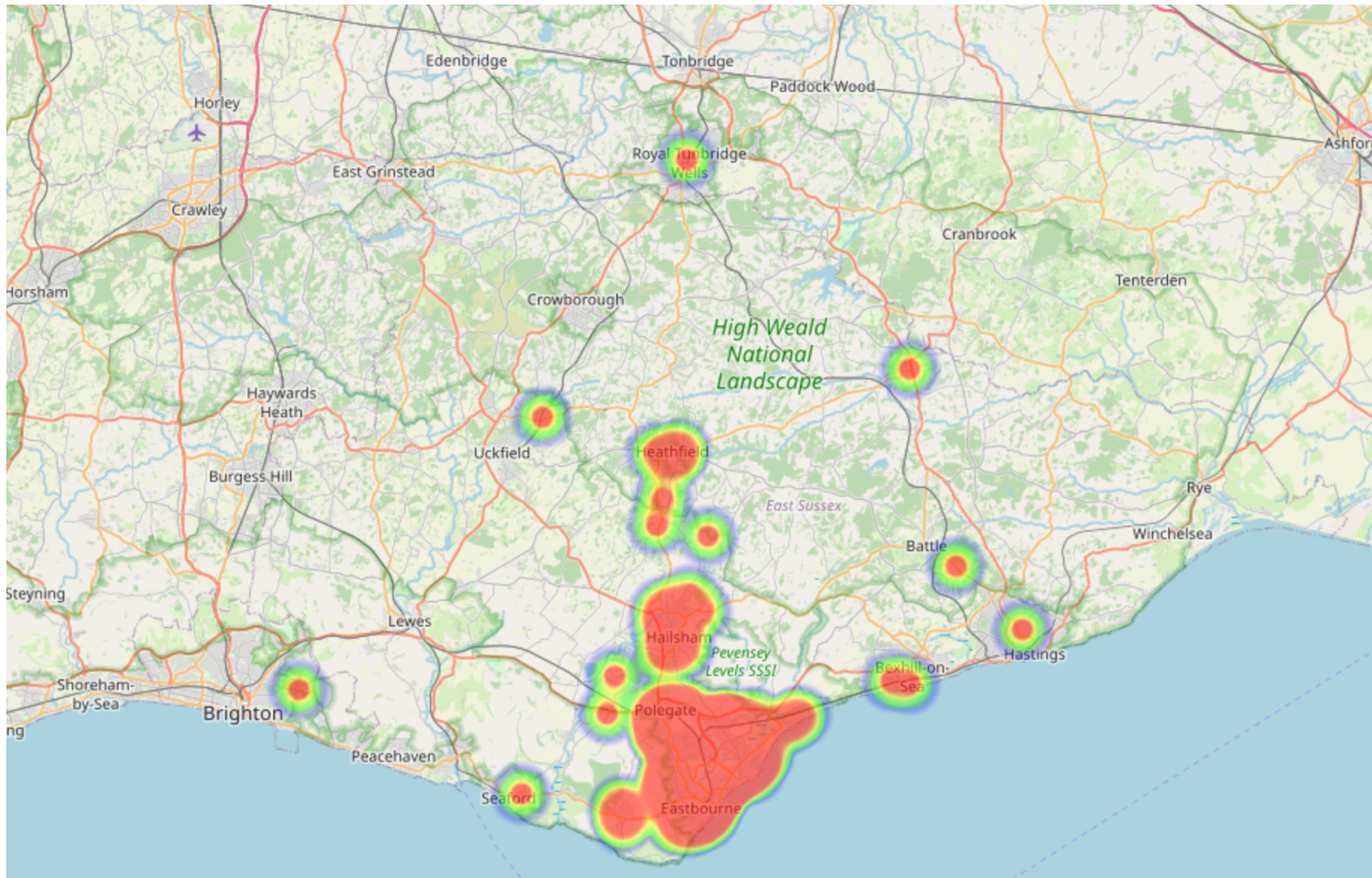


Members by Membership Type





Members by location





Pole Vaulting Facility Update

At last year's AGM, we highlighted the need to reinstate our pole-vaulting facilities, which ceased operation due to landing mats no longer meeting health and safety requirements. The estimated cost of £25,000 to rectify this remains unmet.

Efforts to raise these funds have been significantly hampered by external factors, including the general election, the stretched budgets of local councils, and the publicised closure of other well-used facilities like the Sovereign Centre fun pool. These challenges have made it clear that the council is currently unable to make significant investment in projects like ours.

Despite these setbacks, we remain committed to finding a solution. We will continue to explore fundraising opportunities and adopt a partnership approach similar to the one that enabled the successful renewal of our throws cage in 2023. This will include seeking support from grants, sponsorship, and collaboration with other stakeholders.

The reinstatement of the pole-vaulting facility remains important to the club, and we will keep members updated as we progress.

All-Weather Running Track Update

At last year's AGM, we outlined the challenges facing our aging all-weather running track, now over 23 years old. While the track has performed well over time, the inside lane is showing significant signs of wear. We anticipate that within the next five years, TrackMark inspections may require immediate or phased track renewal.

In response, the club agreed to ring-fence £10,000 annually within our budget for a track replacement fund. While this demonstrates our commitment, it is clear that this amount alone will not cover the substantial costs of a full track replacement. Additional income from events, grants, and sponsorship will be essential to meet the financial requirements of this project.



Since last year, we have made progress in maintaining the track's usability. Repairs to kerbing and deep cleaning have been undertaken to help preserve the facility and ensure it meets TrackMark certification standards for the time being. However, securing long-term solutions will require further collaboration with stakeholders, including local authorities and potential partners.

The committee is also revisiting options for incorporation, charitable status, or becoming a community interest company to potentially unlock more funding avenues. We welcome any expertise or input from members to help guide us through these decisions.

The £10,000 commitment will continue to be reviewed annually to ensure it remains feasible within the club's overall financial position. Through careful planning and collaboration, we aim to secure the future of the track for generations to come.

Mile Night

The 2024 Eastbourne Mile Night, held on May 24th at Eastbourne Sports Park, was a resounding success, drawing 156 athletes and numerous spectators from across the county and beyond. Organised by Eastbourne Rovers Athletic Club, the event featured 12 seeded mile races, allowing participants to compete alongside others with similar target times, fostering both competitive spirit and community engagement.

The mile, an iconic yet accessible distance, attracted a diverse range of runners, from seasoned athletes to newcomers. The event was designed to be inclusive, with heats accommodating estimated times ranging from approximately 15 to 4 minutes, welcoming participants aged 9 and up.

The evening was enhanced by various amenities, including music curated by DJ Dan James, commentary, and food provided by Specs & Bear, creating a vibrant atmosphere for both runners and spectators. Spectators were invited into lane 4 to foster a more engaging environment, and photo-finish electronic timing ensured precise results.



Notably, both the men's and women's track records were broken during the event. Matt Grindrod of Brighton & Hove AC set a new men's record with a time of 4:19.08, while Rae Le Fay of Hastings AC established a new women's record at 4:54.36. Age group trophies were also awarded in 10-year splits, recognising the achievements of athletes across various categories.

The success of the Mile Night was made possible by the dedication of numerous volunteers and officials, whose efforts were fundamental in creating a welcoming and efficient event. Organiser Richard Davis emphasised the importance of inclusivity, stating, "It was important from the outset that the event was inclusive to all, not just track runners, giving anyone who wanted to, the opportunity to run on the track whether they were aiming for a 12-minute mile or a 4-minute mile."

The event also served a philanthropic purpose, with proceeds directed towards maintaining the town's track to secure its future for generations to come. Support from sponsors such as Ronhill, Birchwood Group, Brewers, Wave Leisure, and Athletic Brewing was instrumental in achieving this goal.

Given the overwhelming success and positive feedback, Eastbourne Rovers AC plans to make the Mile Night an annual fixture, with the next event scheduled for May 24, 2025.

The club looks forward to building on this year's achievements and continuing to promote athletics within the community.

Athlete Spotlight: Eleanor Strevens

We are thrilled to announce that Eleanor Strevens, a dedicated member of Eastbourne Rovers since the age of nine and coached by Chris Voice, has been selected to represent Great Britain at the European Cross Country Championships in Antalya, Turkey, on December 8, 2024. This remarkable achievement reflects her unwavering commitment and serves as an inspiration to all athletes within our club.

Path to International Selection



Eleanor's selection for the national team was secured through her outstanding performance at the Liverpool Cross Challenge on November 23, 2024. Despite facing challenging conditions and sustaining a foot injury during the race, she demonstrated exceptional resilience to finish sixth in the Under-20 Women's category. This top-tier finish earned her a coveted spot on the Great Britain and Northern Ireland team for the upcoming European Championships.

Inspiration to Fellow Athletes

Eleanor's journey from a young club member to an international competitor exemplifies the heights that can be reached through dedication and perseverance. Her achievements set a benchmark for aspiring athletes within Eastbourne Rovers, encouraging them to pursue their goals and strive for national honours.

As Eleanor prepares to compete on the European stage, the entire Eastbourne Rovers community extends heartfelt congratulations and support. We look forward to celebrating her continued success and are confident that she will represent both our club and country with distinction.

Athletics Achievement 2024

The 2024 season has been a landmark year for Eastbourne Rovers Athletic Club, with incredible performances across all age groups and disciplines.

Track and Field Success

The Sussex Championships were a standout moment, with Rovers athletes claiming an impressive 17 gold, 4 silver, and 9 bronze medals. Among the highlights was Nathan Burge, who took home three golds in the 100m, 200m, and 300m. His 300m performance of 37.1 seconds set a new Championship Best Performance (CBP), breaking a record previously held by our own Moyo Sargent. Nathan went on to further improve this time to 36.45 seconds at the English Schools Championships, also breaking the county record. Earlier in the year, he set a new Under-15 County indoor record for the 60m with a time of 7.46 seconds.



Eleanor Strevens delivered another incredible performance, breaking the CBP in the 800m with a time of 2:09. She followed this by winning the senior girls' 800m at the English Schools Championships, earning her place to represent England and Great Britain.

The track season saw numerous highlights, including many county champions, a senior girls' winner at the English Schools Championships, and five athletes representing the club. Notably, two athletes secured podium finishes at the English Track and Field Championships in the Under-15 and Under-20 categories. The Under-15, Under-17, and Under-20 groups collectively achieved an impressive 28 personal bests, showcasing a promising future for the club.

Louise Ryan also had an exceptional year, winning the Sussex AA 800m Championship in 2:20.72 and earning her first Sussex vest to compete at the SEAA Inter-County Championships. There, she secured second place with a new personal best of 2:14.68. She capped off the year with her first indoor race at Lee Valley in December, achieving another PB of 1:38.42 in the 600m.

At the English Schools Championships, we celebrated our largest-ever contingent, with eight athletes representing the club: Nathan, Eleanor, Adam Churchyard, Ilya Korchev, Daisy Connor, Fin Lumber Fry, George Armstrong-Smith, and Freda Pearce.

[Younger Athletes Shine](#)

The Under-13 team finished sixth in the league final, with notable performances from Zach Soan, Will Holloway, Jackson Walker, and Max Smith, who excelled in sprints and long jump. Max also finished second in the county Under-13 Minithon. On the girls' side, Milli Phillips, Rosalie McMahan, and Milly Macey stood out in sprints, hurdles, and long jump. While the Under-13 age group struggles with numbers due to competing commitments, the Under-11s have seen increased participation, with the highest number of entrants in recent years.

[Cross Country Achievements](#)

The 2023/2024 cross-country season was exceptionally successful, with Eastbourne Rovers having the most representation of any Sussex club at the English Schools Championships in Pontefract. Despite the unfortunate cancellation of the National



Cross Country Championships due to adverse weather—only the second cancellation in 50 years—our athletes shone brightly.

As we entered the 2024-2025 cross-country season, successes included wins at the Cross Country Relays for the Under-15 Boys and Under-17 Girls, who went on to place second and first, respectively, at the South of England Championships. The rearranged National Cross Country Championships saw Byron Roberts (Under-13 Boys) and Eleanor Strevens (Under-20 Women) finish second in their categories. Additionally, six athletes secured top-20 finishes in their respective age groups, and the Under-15 Girls team claimed a bronze medal.

Eleanor Strevens continued to excel, representing Great Britain and Northern Ireland at the European Cross Country Championships in Turkey and competing for England in Spain. The depth of talent within the club was further demonstrated by 17 athletes being selected for the Sussex Endurance Squad, participating in five training days over the coming months.

Byron Roberts claimed the Year 8 Boys' County Schools Cross Country title, contributing to the team's second-place finish overall in the Sussex Cross Country League and the County Championships. On the girls' side, Chyna Wai was the standout performer and has been selected for the Sussex Endurance Squad.

Our young cross-country athletes impressed in the Under-13 boys' team, now competing as Under-15s. The trio of Joshua Webster, Archie Franklin, and Byron Roberts won the county road relay championships in April, with the B team finishing fifth. The Under-15 Girls team also excelled, earning bronze medals in their category.

[Marathon Highlights](#)

Our endurance athletes delivered outstanding results on the road this year, achieving personal bests, club records, and prestigious qualifications:

- Alison Moore broke the 3-hour barrier at the London Marathon with a time of 2:59:50, setting a new club record and qualifying for the British Marathon Championships at the 2025 London Marathon.



- Phil Wood secured Good For Age (GFA) times at both the London (3:09:03) and Berlin Marathons (3:02:01). Phil's Berlin time cemented his London 2025 GFA spot, and he will chase his Abbott Six Star Medal at the Chicago Marathon in October 2025.
- Richard Davis ran a superb PB of 2:56:31 at the London Marathon, re-qualifying for GFA in 2025 and continuing his preparation to improve further.
- Mark Dredge tackled the challenging Boston Marathon in Massachusetts, securing a PB of 2:57:12 while navigating its famously undulating course.
- Laura Downham achieved a PB of 3:13:00 at the London Marathon, qualifying for the Boston Marathon in 2025.
- Jenny Rowlinson and her husband Jonny ran the London Marathon while pushing her father, David, in a wheelchair weighing 130kg, raising an incredible £14,000 for the Myositis Charity. This Herculean effort also marked Jenny's first marathon PB.
- Patrick Marsden, running as second claim for Rovers, achieved a PB of 2:48:14 at the London Marathon, re-qualifying for GFA in 2025.
- Other Marathon PBs were achieved by Jenny Whelan, Ant Davey, Brian Birkmyre, Luke Creighton, Luke Regan, Kieran Baldwin, Keith Gillard, Ben Pawley, Barry Fontyn, and Dave Kitchener.

Road Runners

The Road Runners (RR) section of Eastbourne Rovers has had a fantastic year, marked by increased membership and a range of achievements both on and off the road. Membership numbers have grown to 81, making the RR group a significant part of the club's adult membership. Full club members are always welcome to join RR activities, and new members consistently highlight the welcoming, friendly, and supportive atmosphere of the group.

The popular "Beastbourne" series made a successful return this year, offering five consecutive 5k races at different locations. Open to all, this event has become a highlight of the RR calendar, combining challenging courses with camaraderie and fun.

RR members have participated in a wide range of events, from parkruns and local road races to ultramarathons and triathlons across the country and abroad. Many have achieved personal bests and podium finishes, while others have raced simply for the joy of running. The group's commitment to the wider running community is evident, with numerous members



volunteering at these events and providing vital support to local races. RR cheer squads are a regular feature, ensuring that no runner crosses the finish line without encouragement.

The RR section's Couch to 5K (C25K) programme continues to thrive, bringing new members to the club and introducing people to the joys of running. This year's intake has been particularly successful, with many participants completing the programme and joining the wider RR group. Planning is well underway for the next C25K intake in January, with significant efforts focused on promotion to ensure strong participation and the opportunity to grow membership further in 2025.

After three years of shared leadership, Debbie, Teresa, and Emma will be stepping down from their roles at the end of the year. Their contributions have been instrumental in growing the RR section, organising events, and fostering a positive environment for runners of all abilities. A smooth transition is being planned, with a list of duties compiled and a handover meeting scheduled for 4 January 2025. The club thanks them for their dedication and the committee for their ongoing support in this busy role.

Looking ahead, the Road Runners are eager to build on this year's successes, welcome new members, and continue being an integral part of Eastbourne Rovers.

Sussex Grand Prix: A Year of Lessons and Motivation

The 2024 Sussex Grand Prix (SGP) brought mixed fortunes for Eastbourne Rovers in a fiercely competitive series featuring 19 clubs from across Sussex. While the final standings may not reflect our ambitions, the season offered valuable lessons and moments of inspiration to carry forward into 2025.

The SGP is a challenging series of 12 races, requiring consistent team representation across 11 events to vie for the overall title, while individuals compete for age-category victories by scoring in just six races. Our campaign began strongly at the Hastings Half Marathon, where Eastbourne Rovers placed an impressive 4th out of 19 clubs. Standout individual performances came from Ellie McLean, who finished as 3rd lady, and Anthony Davey, who placed 12th male—a testament to their hard work and talent.



Unfortunately, the momentum was not sustained through the remainder of the series. Our next-best team placing was 10th at the Hastings 5-Miler, and by the season's end, we finished 17th overall. The title went to our close rivals, Hailsham Harriers, who topped the leaderboard with 1,943 points—a gap of 1,561 points from our final total of 382.

While this year's results may not have matched expectations, it provides a clear motivation for improvement in the future. With a renewed focus on participation, stronger team representation, and greater support for runners aiming for individual and team honours, we are determined to climb the standings in 2025.

Although 2024 presented challenges, it also highlighted areas for growth and development. Together, we can turn this season into a foundation for future success and re-establish Eastbourne Rovers as a force to be reckoned with in the Sussex Grand Prix.

[Masters and League Performances](#)

Eastbourne Rovers' Masters athletes have delivered impressive performances in 2024, achieving notable results both nationally and internationally.

Bryan Brett had an outstanding season, winning the Sussex Road Running Grand Prix title with a near-perfect score of 2,999 points, dropping only one point across the competition. His strong performances earned him selection for the England Masters team, where he finished 13th individually at the international event and helped secure the team prize for England.

Grant Stirling continued to showcase his abilities by winning the British Masters Triple Jump title with a season's best performance. He also took first place in the javelin event at the British Masters Championships.

Brian Slaughter added another strong performance to his athletic career, securing a bronze medal in the 110m hurdles at the British Masters Championships in Derby.



Gratitude to Volunteers

None of this success would be possible without the tireless dedication of our coaches, leaders, team managers, and volunteers. Their efforts ensure that our athletes can compete, train, and thrive in a supportive environment. We are incredibly grateful for everything they do.

2024 has been a year to remember for Eastbourne Rovers. With the commitment of our athletes and the continued support of our community, we look forward to even greater achievements in 2025.