



Alchester Running Club Members' Handbook

Mission Statement

To be recognised as a local centre of excellence and support for the promotion of running as a sport to all-comers over the age of 18.

<https://alchester-runningclub.co.uk>

Affiliated to England Athletics and Oxfordshire Athletics Association

Introduction

Welcome to Alchester Running Club!

We believe that running is for everyone. We aspire to promote the sport of running for all abilities and so you are a valued member of the Club whatever your level of running.

History and Who We Are

Alchester Running Club was formed in 1999 with the intention of developing road, cross country and trail running in the area, with the aim of developing the social as well as competitive aspects of the sport. The name Alchester comes from the old Roman town and fort which were situated just southwest of modern-day Bicester, near the village of Wendlebury.

The Club's logo is a Phoenix, the mythical bird which rose from the flames of its own death. Clubs, evolve and mature, like all organisations, and we are no different. As those were involved with the Club's formation will testify, its birth was difficult. That was over 20 years ago now and the Club has moved on greatly since then with an ever-changing running community and the sport's popularity. We have seen a steady growth in membership over the years. We have a thriving series of internal Club Championships, are competitive at club level in Oxfordshire, successfully organise our own race events, and provide a social framework which we hope members will enjoy alongside running.

Membership

The Club has members of all abilities. Some are absolute beginners and others represent the county. By joining the Club you will be able to find someone of a similar ability to run with. There are a considerable number of benefits you will gain from club membership, as well as the obvious opportunities to meet friendly people to run and socialise with:

- Opportunity to attend Tuesday night Pace Improvement sessions
- Opportunity to attend Thursday night Club Runs (NB you need to be able to run for an hour)
- Opportunity to participate in social runs
- Opportunity to compete in the Alchester Club Championships
- Opportunity to attend the End of Season Awards Night (heavily subsidised by the club)
- Subsidised London Marathon coach for runners and supporters
- Regular communication about Club activities and local races
- Advice, support and motivation from coaches and fellow members
- Discounts for sports-related merchandise and services

Alchester Running Club is affiliated to the Oxfordshire Athletics Association (Oxon AA), the South East Athletics Association and England Athletics (EA). This means you will be entitled to:

- Discounted race entries as an 'affiliated runner' for any official UK Athletics events
- Reduced entry fees for the Mota-vation race series
- Entry for the Oxfordshire Cross County league races (entry fees payable)
- Participate in the Ridgeway Relay (free of charge)
- Opportunity to gain one of Alchester's London Marathon places (conditions apply)

First and second claim membership

When you join a running club, providing it is your only club, that is your **first claim club**. If you subsequently join another club, that will be your **second claim club**. You can race as an individual in open races for any club which you are a member of. However, in league and championship races and to count as part of a scoring team, you must compete for your first claim club, unless it is not affiliated to UK Athletics (UKA) for that discipline, or is not participating in that league. This system is primarily designed to stop elite athletes swapping from club to club regularly.

All members, whether first or second claim, are welcome to train at all our club sessions. In order for your race performances to count for us in local leagues, or to enter our own Club Championship, Alchester Running Club must be your UKA first claim club.

Second claim member benefits can be discussed with the Membership Secretary. Second claim members are not eligible for the Club's London Marathon place or to enter the End of Season Awards.

Membership fees

The membership year runs from 1st April to 31st March. The fee for first claim members includes a fee to register with England Athletics (EA).

The Alchester component of the membership fee will be adjusted for those joining part-way through the year as follows:

If you join 1 st October – 31 st December	(Alchester fee for ½ year + EA fee)
If you join 1 st January – 31 st March	(Alchester fee for ¼ year + EA fee)

Membership fees are set at the AGM each year. Please see the [Membership](#) page of the website for the current fees.

When joining or renewing your membership you will be asked to confirm that you have read our Privacy Statement and will be sent a copy of this Members' Handbook.

Hardship Fund

Our membership fee is in line with other local running clubs and we feel we offer members a good deal, especially if they are fully involved in the range of Club activities on offer. We do however acknowledge that the membership fee may be unaffordable for some and we do not want this to be a barrier to membership. As members of a local running club we know how beneficial being part of a local sports club can be to physical, social and mental health. As a result, Alchester Running Club has committed to supporting a number of people to become members where their financial circumstances may preclude them from joining the Club.

Please contact the Membership Secretary in confidence if you would like to discuss the support that may be available.

Affiliation

We are affiliated to Oxfordshire Athletics Association, the South East Athletics Association and England Athletics.

Members of EA affiliated clubs do not have to pay the 'Additional Unattached Entry Fee', currently £2 per race. The Unattached fees are used to provide Public Liability Insurance of up to £10m. You will be provided with your England Athletics Number when you join Alchester Running Club. Please keep this safe as you will need it when entering races.

New to Running

Many of us started running by doing the [Couch to 5k](#) programme, a lap of Bicester, or the weekly [parkrun](#) 5k events. If you are a complete beginner, or have never been a member of a running club before, you may be a bit daunted about joining Alchester Running Club. Don't be - we have members with a wide range of ability, age and commitment. You are more than welcome and you are bound to find someone in the Club who is of a similar standard to you.

If you are new to running or feel you are lacking in confidence we recommend starting with a local [Run Together](#) running group led by a UK Athletics Coach and Alchester Running Club member who can help to get you going and give you the confidence to come along to Alchester Running Club when you are ready. A number of our current members also attend the various Run Together groups in Bicester so it is a great way to learn more about the Club and build the confidence to join.

Club Nights

You will find that you will improve quite rapidly just by increasing the number of miles you run each week and by running with other people. The more you run, the fitter and the faster you will become. Training with others of a similar ability and knowing you won't be running alone is a great motivator to get out and run. We hold two training sessions each week: see the [Training](#) page for locations.

Tuesdays - Pace Improvement

We meet at 6.50pm for a prompt 7pm start at Gavray Drive, Bicester (in the winter) and at Whitelands Sports Fields on Kingsmere (in the summer). These sessions are designed to improve your pace. Whilst all runners improve as they increase their mileage, the rate of improvement will ultimately slow down. However by increasing the intensity of training, it is still possible to improve without having to run ever further. This type of training normally involves running repeated periods (reps or intervals) of pre-determined distance or time at a set pace with a timed period of recovery between each. The content of each session is planned beforehand and we are lucky to have an experienced Leadership in Running Fitness coach who leads these sessions.

Thursdays - Club Run

We meet at 6.50pm for a prompt 7pm start at the back of Bicester Leisure Centre (off Queen's Avenue in the centre of Bicester). Ideally you should be able to run for an hour to enjoy the Club Runs. We have different routes for summer and winter. We run in groups at a range of paces from 7 minutes per mile to 10 minutes per mile, plus a 'relaxed group' with a slightly shorter route and slower pace. The groups are organised on the night according to which members are there and how fast they want to run. It is important that the group does not split up and leave anyone to run on their own. As you improve you can run in a slightly faster pace group who can help you develop even further. Everybody will give you advice on the best training techniques, different routes and what kit to buy!

Try Before You Buy

We welcome new members to any of our sessions, but please inform a member of the committee in advance if you are thinking of coming along.

We know that you might want to find out a bit more about Alchester Running Club before you commit to being a member. We are happy to welcome anyone who is interested in joining to run with us for two weeks. If you like what you see after that you will be encouraged to join the Club.

Club Kit

It is always nice to feel part of a team and running/racing in the club kit is a great way to do that.

The main Alchester Running Club kit consists of technical vests and T-shirts (long-sleeved and short-sleeved), with a white base colour, a red and blue stripe down each side, the Club logo inscribed in red on the front and *Alchester* inscribed on the back. This kit must be worn when competing in Club championship events, Oxon Cross Country league races, the Ridgeway Relay and Mota-variation races.



You are encouraged to wear your Alchester vest where you are using your England Athletics discount, particularly if you are hoping to claim a Club record or if you are lucky enough to get the Club place in the London Marathon.

Other Alchester branded kit is also available based on these colours, such as hoodies, jackets and hi-viz tops.

See the [Kit](#) page on the website for details of the items available or please contact the Kit Secretary to place an order.

Club Website & Social Media

Our website <https://alchester-runningclub.co.uk> is designed to enable us to provide key information to members, provide regular updates on forthcoming events, race results and reports, and to encourage new members.

We have a members-only Facebook page, which members will be added to when they join and will be removed when they leave. We also have social media accounts (Facebook, X and Instagram). Please share photos and updates of events that you have done.

We have an active Alchester Running Club group on Strava, which new members are welcome to join. This can provide a good way of motivating yourself and others.

All members who use social media are reminded to act appropriately and to select privacy settings which they are happy with.

Club Communication

The Club produces regular newsletters which are distributed by email. These include important notices and details of weekly events, upcoming races, and social activities. When you join the Club you will be added to the distribution list. An abridged version of each newsletter is published on the [News](#) page of the website.

Club Championship

The Club runs its own internal championship from 1st November to 31st October each year. In October each year the committee selects a number of races of various distances over the next 12 months. Club members are allocated points for each race they complete depending on their finish position relative to the other Club members in their category.

To participate in the Club Championship you should:

- Be a current first claim Club member with all membership fees paid prior to competing
- Wear an Alchester Running Club vest for all Championship races
- Compete under your own name and use your own race number

The Club Championship is divided into the following categories:

- Senior Men (under 40)
- Veteran Men over 40
- Veteran Men over 50
- Veteran Men over 60
- Veteran Men over 70
- Senior Ladies (under 35)
- Veteran Ladies over 35
- Veteran Ladies over 45
- Veteran Ladies over 55
- Veteran Ladies over 65

Your age on 1st November will determine which category you will participate in. We don't have a non-binary category at the moment, please contact the Club Championship Secretary to discuss if required.

At the end of the championship year, the points are added up to determine the winners in each category and the overall winners. Prizes are awarded at the annual End of Season Awards Night, which usually takes place in November. For further information please see the [Club Championship](#) page on the website or updates in the weekly newsletters.

London Marathon Places

Many of our members are involved in the annual ritual of applying for places in the ballot for the London Marathon. The Club is allocated one or two places for the London Marathon each year (this depends on the number of members we have at the time of allocation). Members who would like to be considered for the Club place are entered into a draw. To enter the Club's London Marathon draw, you must:

- Be a fully-paid up first claim member before entering the London Marathon ballot
- Have received confirmation of rejection from the individual London Marathon ballot
- Have completed a minimum of three Club Championship races (including a maximum of one parkrun) prior to the Alchester draw
- Have helped or volunteered for the Club at least once (marshalling at the Alchester 5k, Oxfordshire Cross Country or Mota-vation events)
- Not have been allocated a Club London Marathon place in the last 2 years

The draw is usually made at the End of Season Awards Night. Members who have entered the draw are encouraged to attend the Awards Night if they are able, although you may still win if you are not present on the night.

The lucky winner(s) of the draw for the Club place(s) must be a first claim member when the London Marathon takes place, and run in Alchester kit at the London Marathon.

Cross Country



Did you have to run cross country at school? Did you enjoy it? Well, things haven't changed very much, although if you didn't enjoy it then, you might now! You will still get wet and muddy, it is likely to be cold, and possibly windy and wet. You do however get to run through some excellent countryside with great views and lots of hills. Cross Country racing is an excellent way of building stamina and is very different from the usual road race scene.

Alchester Running Club competes in the Oxfordshire Cross County League. Races take place on the first Sunday in the month from November to March each year. The races are around 5 miles and are open to runners of all abilities. You are advised to invest in a pair of cross country shoes, which either have spikes or studs for grip in muddy conditions. You are also required to wear Club kit when running.

Cross Country is a great way to meet fellow Club members. We have a large Club tent where everyone congregates before and after the race. There is often tea and coffee available and some amazing cakes. There are children's, youth as well as men and women's races at every meeting so you can cheer on other runners too.

In addition to the Oxfordshire Cross Country League meetings, we compete in County Championship races and even the Southern County Cross Country Championships which are normally held at Parliament Hill Fields in North London.

See the [Cross Country](#) page on the website for further details.

Mota-vation

Kidlington Running Club organise the [Mota-vation](#) series of races of approximately 4 miles held monthly at various venues across Oxfordshire on Thursday nights from April to August. Club members are entitled to discounted rates for the series, and there is usually a great turn-out of Alchester runners. We also need to provide marshals, so you can still be involved if you are injured!

Ridgeway Relay

The [Ridgeway Relay](#) is probably one of the best team events on the running calendar. Organised by Marlborough Running Club in June each year, it is a team relay run along 89 miles of the Ridgeway National Trail. It starts at 7.30am from Ivinghoe Beacon and finishes at approximately 7pm in Marlborough. The course is broken down into 10 legs of varying distances of between 5.5 miles and 11 miles. It is a great off-road event and the Club normally enter two or three teams for some friendly inter-club rivalry.



Look out for details of how to sign up to the cross country and Mota-vation series or join the Ridgeway Relay team via the weekly email newsletter.

Multi-Terrain / Off-Road /Trail Running

Multi-terrain races have become increasingly popular, particularly with those who are more interested where they run, rather than how fast! Multi-terrain means exactly that: a mixture of surfaces including road, footpaths, bridleways and grass, interspersed with stiles, streams and various other obstacles. Distances vary significantly. Although you can normally run in road shoes, many runners use a pair of specially designed trail shoes which tend to be studded for better grip. Most manufacturers now make trail shoes as part of their range.

Social Events

Alchester Running Club organises a range of social events throughout the year. As well as social runs, past social events have included: curry nights, golf days, quizzes, Easter treasure hunt, BBQs, Jingle Bells Christmas Lights run and online events.

See the weekly newsletter or our [Social Events](#) page on the website for details of forthcoming social runs and events. If you have any ideas for social events then please get in touch with the Social Secretary.

Social Runs

The Club organises evening runs starting and finishing at local pubs in the area – trail runs in nearby villages in the summer, or road runs in Bicester in the winter. Members of all abilities are welcome. Social Runs are usually around 6 miles with designated leaders for each group. These runs are at a more relaxed pace than usual Club Nights and the main aim is to socialise and have fun during the run and over food and drink afterwards. Please note the social runs replace the usual Club Night.

Alchester Running Club on Tour!

In previous years Club members have travelled both within the UK and abroad to compete in events such as the Porto and Valencia Half Marathons and enjoy a weekend of sightseeing and socializing.

End of Season Awards Night

This is the social highlight of the year and usually takes place in November. This is a great opportunity to get dressed up and spend time with other Club members (not in running gear), have a meal, a few drinks and a dance! It also includes the presentation of awards to recognise running achievements and contributions to the Club, the London Marathon Draw, and Club Championship prizes.

Members will be invited to nominate and to vote in these award categories.

- Club person of the year
- Best performance of the year
- Female runner of the year
- Male runner of the year
- Most improved runner of the year
- Newcomer of the year

Alchester Running Club Races

The Club organises the [Alchester 5k](#) in August. The club has previously organised the Candleford Canter, Cottisford 5k, Charndon 5k and the Andy Reading 10k. Club races are an important part of the calendar because they bring vital funds into the Club. Members are therefore asked to assist in hosting races and events organised by the Club, rather than competing in them.

Feedback from members

As a member of Alchester Running Club, we want you to know that this is your Club and we want the Club to be safe and fun. Our members contribute to the success of the Club so it is important that we understand what you think is good and what we could be doing better. As a result the Committee will conduct an Annual Survey every March when the new Committee is elected. This will help inform the Committee's priorities. We encourage all members to participate and have their say.

Membership Responsibilities

We encourage members to participate as fully as possible in all aspects of the Club. When you join Alchester Running Club you agree to observe all Club rules, policies and procedures, and to abide by the England Athletics Codes of Conduct and any other rules and regulations which may be set by national, regional or local athletics associations and race organisers.

Members will be asked to assist in hosting races and events organised by the Club, in preference to competing in such events.

When training in a group with the Club:

- All run on one side of the road, preferably facing oncoming traffic
- Always use pavements where available
- Wear light-coloured and/or reflective clothing when running in the dark
- Obey any instruction concerning the safety of the group or individual group members given by any designated group leader
- Be courteous and respectful to members of the public

Environmental Sustainability

Alchester Running Club is committed to improving our environmental impact. We recognise we are not perfect and there is much more to do, and that we should all consider the environment in our individual and collective decision making.

On the positive side, running has a relatively low environmental impact, especially compared to other sports. Running doesn't require much in the way of specialist equipment or facilities and we can run almost anywhere. However, this comes with a responsibility to respect the places we run and to ensure our actions have no negative impact, by following a few simple guidelines:

- Check local rules and don't run anywhere you shouldn't
- Don't drop litter
- Leave things where they belong
- Don't disrupt wildlife
- Leave only footprints...

Runners do not need a lot of equipment but we can quickly acquire cupboards full of old trainers, race t-shirts and medals. An estimated 300,000 tonnes of garments goes to landfill each year in the UK. A polyester T-shirt is equivalent to around 12 plastic bottles. Whilst it is exciting to receive and collect finisher T-shirts, especially if have completed a particularly significant event, we encourage you to recycle your old running gear.

We know that we should change our running shoes every 300-500 miles, but what can we do with them afterwards to be more sustainable? Try reusing running shoes for other purposes, or recycle them at Runners Needs stores: <https://www.runnersneed.com/about-us/recyclemyrun.html>.

As much as possible please car share when travelling to races, take your own reusable water bottles, and bring your own cup to Cross Country races to enjoy a hot drink after.

Welfare & Safeguarding

The welfare and safety of our members is paramount and the Club has a range of policies, procedures and risk assessments in place to support this. We ask members to not attend Club sessions if you feel unwell. We reserve the right to make changes at short notice to Club activities to be able to run them safely.

We have Welfare Officers to support Club members. Should you need support or have an issue related to welfare or safeguarding please contact the Welfare Officers, whose details are on the [Committee](#) page of the website.

Raising a Concern

We hope that you will not need to raise a concern as a member of Alchester Running Club, but if you do please see our Safeguarding Policy or Grievance and Disciplinary Policy depending on the nature of your concern.

Running for Charities

We know that many runners run to raise money for charity, which we fully support. However the charities we each choose can be a very personal decision. The Club has no central charity fund to support individual runners and is not able to promote individual members' appeals for sponsorship. The Club does however raise money for local charities as part of the races that we organise. Any exceptions to the above are to be discussed and agreed by the Committee.

Club Committee

Alchester Running Club has a duty of care towards members and is responsible for ensuring all our activities are well run and safe. The Club is run by a volunteer Committee made up of Club members. As required under the [Constitution](#), there are a number of elected Officers who hold the following key responsibilities and are elected at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) each year.

- Chair Person
- Vice Chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Membership Secretary

The Officers are supported by a wider group of Committee members who take responsibility for organising races, social events and the Club Championships. See the [Committee](#) page of the website for the current Committee members.

We have role descriptions in place for the key Committee roles, to help people understand their roles and to support the recruitment process. We are always keen to reinvigorate our Committee to bring in new skills, experience and perspectives. Please do get in touch if you have feedback or want to get involved.

Committee Meetings

The Committee will meet at least 4 times a year to discuss Club business and related matters on a regular, recorded basis. Our Club Constitution provides further information. Any member has the right to attend a Committee meeting. If you are interested then please discuss with the Chair Person.

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The AGM is held every year in February. Your Club needs you, and all members are encouraged to attend. Information will be provided in newsletters nearer the time. The AGM has a set agenda which includes election of Officers, setting the membership fees, approval of the [Club Constitution](#) and Rules, and approval of the financial accounts.

Club Policies & Procedures

We want Alchester Running Club to have good governance and comply with all the relevant legislation. This will ensure our members have a positive experience at the Club and ensure that the Committee is able to manage Club matters appropriately.

All members, and in particular Committee members, should make themselves aware of the following policies and procedures:

- Club Constitution & Rules
- Inclusion Policy
- Child Safeguarding Policies
- Adult Safeguarding Policies
- Health & Safety Policy
- Grievance & Disciplinary Policy
- Privacy Statement
- General Data Protection Policy
- Financial Policy
- Membership Handbook

These are reviewed, updated and agreed by the Committee each year, and available to download from the [Membership](#) page of the website.

Honorary & Life Membership

Honorary membership may be conferred in exceptional circumstances upon individuals who, whilst not being members of the Club, are nonetheless deemed to have made an outstanding personal contribution to the Club's objectives.

Life Membership will ordinarily be granted in recognition a significant personal contribution to the Club's affairs.

The selection of Honorary and Life Members is the responsibility of the Committee.