

Masters World Championships 2014 – Pillerseetal



And they're off, at the start of an exciting Masters. Read below for an in-depth analysis and full results from Pillerseetal

My Austrian Adventure got off to a rather shaky start! I'd arranged to meet Godfrey at Heathrow Terminal 5 at 3:45 because we were making the trip by car, but I'd forgotten this and was actually at the airport at 3:15. Godfrey was there, too, at much the same time but, probably only a minute or two before I arrived, he disappeared into the terminal building. Having realised that I was half an hour early, that I couldn't leave the car but that I needed a pee, I decided to drive a little way from the airport to find a suitable place. As it happens, there are very few suitable places in the immediate vicinity of the airport and, by the time I'd found one, I was then stuck in the early evening rush hour and the out and back journey took an hour, so I wasn't back at the airport until 4:15! Oh well, Godfrey was waiting patiently, we loaded his things into the car and we were off, still with plenty of time in hand.

The journey into France was without incident; we arrived at Folkestone with just enough time to buy a sandwich and then it was straight onto Le Shuttle and we were on our way through northern France and into Belgium. Now you might imagine that Belgium would be much like all other countries; lots of roadside hotels in motorway service stations but, if you imagine this, you'd be wrong! From west to east of Belgium, a distance of maybe 200 miles, we saw only one motorway hotel but, when we stopped to investigate, it seemed completely shut. So we headed on towards Luxembourg and, at about midnight, we decided to turn off the motorway and look for a hotel in the sizeable town of Arlon. The centre of Arlon at midnight was, however, as deserted as the centre of Arlon is at midnight, and there was not a hotel to be found. So it was back onto the road.

With Godfrey in charge of the map, we got a bit lost near the city of Luxembourg and failed to get into the centre. But then, by chance, we passed a couple of hotels by the side of the road and, if I remember correctly, about €70 was all that was needed for both of us and a little after 1 a.m. we were in bed.

The journey continued fairly uneventfully the following day (leaving aside the couple of occasions when we took the wrong turning or missed the right turning) and, by early on Tuesday evening we were on the motorway south of Munich with not so far left to go. We stopped for something to eat for the last time, and this gave us an hour or an hour and a half or so to complete the trip to Pillerseetal. Not long after this stop, a German police car passed us and the sign (in English) and arrow invited us to pull over, which we did. The German policeman then asked to see passports, driving licence and other documents although, at first, I thought that I didn't have my licence and he was not very impressed by this. Realising, however, that I did have it, after all, in my computer bag, I said "No, hang on, I do have it after all. Ha" (the "Ha" indicating my relieved surprise), and this was met by the policeman's stern "Don't laugh!".

Anyway, the documents were taken away and studied by the policemen for quite a long time in their car, before being handed back and we were free to go. It turned out that they weren't interested in the fact that I had a broken wing mirror, that I had only "tyres I use in winter" as opposed to "winter tyres", that we'd not paid the vignette to use the motorway or that we didn't have a "Gonna Broad" sticker on the car. No, no, all they wanted was to steal the little plastic wallet in which my driving licence was kept and which had been in my possession since about 1976; a crime which, I have to say, they pulled off with panache!

Relieved to be allowed to continue, we did so. It had been raining quite a lot for much of our trip down through Germany but south of Munich is where one often starts to see snow. This was not the case for us, though. There were very small patches by the side of the road but it was clear that the rain was washing this away quite quickly. It didn't get much better as we turned off the motorway and started the climb up to the Pillerseetal area at a height of about 700 metres. It continued to rain during much of this climb (which wasn't made easy by the fact that there seemed to be very few road markings) but, a short while before we reached Waidring, the village containing our hotel, the rain stopped. We found the hotel easily enough, although very little snow was visible, and by about 8 p.m. we were installed in our comfortable, if bijoux, hotel room and the trip was finished off by a pizza at a local restaurant. All in all a reasonable journey.

It might be worth pausing for a while to recount the recent history which led up to this event. A couple of weeks before it, I started receiving E-mails from various people asking whether I was aware of the lack of snow and the high temperatures. This was surely a shum mishtake (*Ed.*), because the webcam showing the stadium area seemed to show plenty of snow, so I sought to reassure everyone that there would be no problems in this respect. About a week before the event, though, I received an E-mail from the WMA president, saying that the organisers had managed to prepare only one 5 km track so, although the event would go ahead, the first set of races would be half distance (so, for most of us, 15 kms instead of the usual 30 kms). It later turned out that the event very nearly didn't happen at all. The organisers were given until the Sunday one week before the event to prepare a 5 km circuit and, had they been unable to do this, the whole thing would have been cancelled; the first time ever in 30 years!

Anyway, after breakfast on Wednesday 23rd January, we headed up into St Ulrich to investigate the tracks. We took a slightly wrong turning and ended up at the local tracks, which should have provided a link to the race venue, but it was obvious that we were in the wrong place and two kilometres further up we were at the stadium. This consisted of a rather muddy car park and a well-arranged large tent with three sections: waxing, changing and restaurant, all of which proved more than adequate for the whole event. From the changing tent, it was a 50 metre walk to the stadium where we found, luckily, that the tracks started.

Knowing that only the 5 km track had been prepared, this was what we set off to try out, skating to save any waxing hassles. Now we've all seen tracks prepared from stored and/or man-made snow, and they are built up so that they are quite a bit higher than the surroundings, and this was what I'd been expecting. But these tracks were not like this at all; they were the same height as all the surrounding snow, they were very icy and hard (at least when we set off for the first time), not made any easier by the corduroy marks of the piste machine. The snow was very thin in many places, with the mud underneath visible. In summary, the conditions were fairly scary, saved only by a thin covering of new snow. All the downhill runs were tricky, while they remained hard and icy, until the surface softened at about 11 a.m. as the temperature rose to about 3 °C. I would certainly not have liked to race on them early in the morning.

Back in the stadium, we met Sorin Milas, Romanian former BMCCSA member, winner of the British Roller Ski Series and now living in the Canary Isles and racing for Spain. He reported that the tracks had been even worse the previous day but, in general, he seemed happy and at ease with the conditions. Anyway, Godfrey and I did three laps of the circuit and, leaving aside the tricky conditions, it seemed reasonably fair. Out of the start, there was a very gentle downhill section, which was plenty wide enough, for the first 500 metres or so. The track then turned left for another 100 metres or so of flat skiing before turning right and climbing a short, fairly sharp and off-camber hill. It then descended back to its initial level with a corner at the bottom which was tricky in the icy conditions but, otherwise, no problem. After another 100 metres or so of level skiing, the track started to climb gently, with only one very short, little climb, to the high point at about 2.5 kms. This whole climb was easily Skate 2able, at least at training pace.

From the high point, the tracks descended much the way they had come up, and the descent was easy, with just one sharpish turn which was easy as long as one stayed in the tracks. More flat sections followed, with a sweeping left and then right corner (although we could see a steep climb and steeper descent which were not yet prepared but which would feature later in the event), before the track climbed again, this time more steeply over maybe 50 metres or so before reaching a plateau, descending down round a rapid left turn, then back up to the plateau again. 50 metres of flat brought us to the only major downhill, tricky when icy, which led to a gentle left turn then a 180° right hand turn after which it was a very gently climb back into the stadium.

After a filling and reasonably-priced goulash soup and bread roll (which was to become our mainstay as far as lunch was concerned) in the restaurant tent, Godfrey and I decided to head up to Hochfilzen, to try out the tracks there, which was about 10 kms or so by car from the stadium (actually, it would have been 10 kms or so by whichever means of transport we'd used but we had the car so it was best to use it). Hochfilzen is a bit higher than St Ulrich but there was not substantially more snow. There was a 2.5 km circuit which we skied twice, and the snow was soft in the warmer conditions, but it certainly wasn't worth making the trip there each day for training.

On Wednesday night there was quite heavy snow, making the tracks a lot slower and downhills no problem. We still stuck to skating, though because, with new snow and temperatures between zero and 2 °C, grip waxing might have been tricky. In retrospect, this lack of waxing experience might have been a mistake! At supper on Thursday, a minor problem was brought to my attention. Brian said that it was strange that I'd opted for the two longer races in skating. This was indeed strange and, again, surely shum mishtake (*Ed.*), because I was doing all three races in classic. It was, after all, a 'classic' year, I'd told everybody that I was doing three classic races and this was exactly what I'd trained for. The start lists, however, told a different story; I'd concentrated so much on getting everybody else's races right that I'd forgotten to check my own; bugger. Still, I'm a top international athlete and skier, so how much difference could it make to change race styles at the last moment? Read on, dear friend, and you will find out!

I don't remember a great deal about Friday, except that we all went up to Hochfilzen (again) for the opening ceremony where we met Peter Moysey for the first time, and Bronwen Steiner, entering her first Masters. The ceremony all took place under cover (which was good because it was snowing and cold – no walking through the streets as in previous years) and generally the whole thing passed off well.

And so to Saturday 25th January and the first race day; 15 km classic ('my' race, sniff ☺). The snow had stopped at about 10 p.m. in the night and the temperature in the stadium when we arrived was about -1 °C but rising. With new snow likely to be around zero, Brian, Alasdair and Hans all opted for sandpapered skis, and only Alasdair reported a lack of grip during the race. First BMCCSA member to start was Peter Moysey and whatever grip wax or grip system he used, it certainly worked extremely well! With a finishing percentage of just 13.3 % this moved him easily to the top of the Best of All Time performance list for a classic race by a BMCCSA member (although, technically, the record for a British skier still remains with Brian Adams). Not only that, but it was also his best race of the week and, at the end, he was interviewed on the PA system on account of being something of a local celebrity in the area.

All but one of the other BMCCSA members started together in the M06 category but two, Brian and Hans, reported gravitational problems. Brian fell very soon after the start and was last coming out of the stadium. He soon started to catch people, though, but the fall was perhaps a shame because his 22.9 % was just a little below his British best of 21.9 % in a classic race and his best result of this event. Hans, making his Masters debut, was going well but then fell just before the end as he was concentrating on catching the person in front of him; shame. As with Brian and Peter, this was his best performance of the week. Alasdair's performance (perhaps because he wasn't happy with the grip) was middling by his normal classic performances and he was to go on to do better in a later race.

By the afternoon, the temperature was up to +2 °C. I don't know whether this had an effect on Patrick's performance because he started later, at midday. Like the others, this was his best race of the week in performance terms, but his percentage was somewhat down in relation to previous Masters' efforts.

In the results below, speeds are calculated on the basis of the *intended* distance, not the actual distance. In practice, 3 x 5 kms was approximately 14.2 kms, while the 10 km track was actually 11.2 kms! Some people say that knowing speeds is fairly pointless, because they depend so much on track and snow conditions. I tend to agree, but I include them here simply because they are one other way for people to compare their own performance with other skiers.

Men's M01-M06 15 km classic technique, Saturday 25th January

Fastest	Christian Baldauf	AUT	M04	40:00.0	22.5 km/h		
1)	Leif Markfjord	SWE	M05	40:22.5	22.3 km/h		
24)	Peter Moysey	NZL	M05	45:44.5	19.7 km/h	13.3 %	(46 starters)
1)	Gianpaolo Englaro	ITA	M06	41:47.2	21.5 km/h		
36)	Brian Adams	GBR	M06	51:21.7	17.5 km/h	22.9 %	
43)	Hans Nilsson	GBR	M06	56:34.7	15.9 km/h	35.4 %	
47)	Alasdair Wilson	GBR	M06	1.01:25.0	14.7 km/h	47.0 %	(48 starters)

Men's M07-M09 15 km classic technique, Saturday 25th January

Fastest	Ferdinand Kraller	GER	M07	43:06.0	20.9 km/h		
1)	Alpo Virtanen	FIN	M09	44:31.2	20.2 km/h		
28)	Patrick o'Connor	USA	M09	1.11:59.5	12.5 km/h	61.7 %	(36 starters)



Brian, already back with the pack, climbs towards the plateau. Conditions meant herringbone



Alasdair at the same spot, but with less grip than Brian

When Sunday came, for the first skate race, it had continued to snow and was snowing during the race, too. This was not good, because in places (especially the start area), the tracks had not been pressed down and were at least ankle deep. I'd anticipated rather colder conditions than the -2 °C it was, and had prepared my skis with Toko pink, -4 to -10 °C, which was almost certainly too slow. One of our team members, too (who will remain nameless but let's just say that it rhymes with lion madam's) suggested that fluoro powder would not be necessary and, sadly, I followed this advice. But back to me later!

First off in the M03 category were Peter Fairhurst, making his Masters debut, and Alistair Brown. Peter was possibly pacing himself and working himself into the racing because, while his percentage made him second best British 'young male' (under 60), he was going to improve on this in each subsequent race he did. For Alistair, this was his best Masters performance, a significant improvement over his previous best of 53.7 % in Oberwiesental two years earlier.

Because everybody was squashed onto the same 5 km loop, age categories had been combined and this meant that I started off with Martin. The fact that I'd waxed too cold and had no fluoro powder brought back all the memories of previous Masters events before I discovered high-fluoro waxes; by the time I was half way down the start straight, almost everybody else was at the end of it! Things got worse, though. In the heavy snow, near white-out conditions and with my glasses steaming up, I just couldn't see where I was going. As I was near the end of the first lap, Brian told me that I was about 30 seconds ahead of Martin. But then I descended the last hill before the stadium, turned the corner at the bottom, didn't see the edge of the track and skied straight off into the deep, soft snow at the side, falling in the process. By the time I'd picked myself and sorted myself out, Martin was past me. I caught him again on the run down from the stadium but he latched on behind me and followed all the way up to the high point of the track. As we started to go back down the hill, he glided past me again and that was it, game over. Sometimes a small difference in ski speed makes it worth pushing harder, but this was too big a difference.

Last of the 'young men' was Chris Donnelly in the M06 category and, on what could be considered 'home snow' with him living relatively nearby in Munich, this was going to be his best race of the week. Normally the older men would have done a shorter distance than the rest of us but, with the shortened races, everybody did the same distance, and there were excellent performances from our overseas BMCCSA members, Jack White from Canada recording what was, at the time, his third best ever Masters performance, only a little behind his results from McCall in 2008. Steve Smigiel, always happy, was slightly faster than Jack but, in a quicker category, he ended up with a slightly worse percentage. Despite this, however, it was still his best ever Masters result! Last but by no means least, my roommate Godfrey seemed content with his race, but he hadn't bought his new skis at this point!



Perhaps not the most flattering view of Martin, but it's the one I had



Dr. Pinney not having a good wax day. The flat hill in the background is the top of the last steep climb

Men's M01-M06 15 km free technique, Sunday 26th January

Fastest	Benjamin Seifert	GER	M01	37:17.1	24.1 km/h		
1)	Michele Vescom	ITA	M03	39:14.3	22.9 km/h		
26)	Peter Fairhurst	GBR	M03	53:52.2	16.7 km/h	37.3 %	
28)	Alistair Brown	GBR	M03	58:06.4	15.5 km/h	48.1 %	(33 starters)
1)	Norbert Ganner	AUT	M04	38:21.7	23.5 km/h		
46)	Martin Arnold	GBR	M04	59:11.1	15.2 km/h	54.3 %	(47 starters)
1)	Alexander Abramov	RUS	M05	39:46.0	22.6 km/h		
42)	Adam Pinney	GBR	M05	1.00:28.2	14.9 km/h	52.1 %	(47 starters)
1)	Guido Masiero	ITA	M06	39:53.1	22.6 km/h		
59)	Chris Donnelly	GBR	M06	54:28.4	16.5 km/h	36.6 %	(64 starters)

I got the impression that there was a bit of secret rivalry going on among our ladies, all four of them racing in the same style and over the same distance. Top honours, in terms of race time, went to Jenny but, by the vagaries of these things, best percentage went to newcomer Bronwen. Also in her first Masters, Helen had the edge over seasoned veteran (of one previous event) Dagmar.

Ladies F01-F06 10 km free technique, Sunday 26th January

Fastest	Elena Mizonova	RUS	F01	28:16.1	21.2 km/h		
4)	Jennifer Munro	GBR	F01	37:04.0	16.2 km/h	31.1 %	(4 starters)
1)	Viktoria Moiseeva	RUS	F02	29:16.5	20.5 km/h		
6)	Bronwen Steiner	GBR	F02	37:48.4	15.9 km/h	29.1 %	(8 starters)
1)	Bernadette Roche	FRA	F05	30:11.2	19.9 km/h		
14)	Helen Murray	GBR	F05	40:14.6	14.9 km/h	33.3 %	
15)	Dagmar Junghanns	GBR	F05	43:51.4	13.7 km/h	45.3 %	(15 starters)

Men's M07-M09 15 km free technique, Sunday 26th January

Fastest	Sakari Matikainen	FIN	M07	43:27.7	20.7 km/h		
65)	Godfrey Rhimes	GBR	M07	1.09:36.5	12.9 km/h	60.2 %	(68 starters)
1)	Andre Escoffier	FRA	M08	45:36.9	19.7 km/h		
32)	Steve Smigiel	USA	M08	54:18.8	16.6 km/h	19.1 %	(56 starters)
1)	Andre Grob	FRA	M09	46:35.5	19.3 km/h		
12)	Jack White	CAN	M09	54:39.6	16.5 km/h	17.3 %	(27 starters)

With the event saved and safe on account of all the new snow, we were told at the Team Captains' meeting on Saturday evening that, from Monday's 10 km races onwards, all races would take place on the correct courses. I objected to this (slightly), on the basis that, with most of Sunday taken up with racing, there would be very little chance for people to try out the new sections of the track, but this objection met with very little support, mainly because most people were fed up going round and round the 5 km circuit.

So it was that the first time I tried the first part of the new tracks was early on Sunday morning before my 15 km race. This, in retrospect, was probably a bit of a dim idea, mainly because the tracks were heavy with new snow and, much as in the race, I couldn't really see where I was going and fell a couple of times! Anyway, the new section was challenging! After the gentle descent from the stadium and at the point where the 5 km track turned left, the new section went straight on and straight up a pretty steep hill, certainly the hardest we were to climb; not as steep as the 'wall' at Autrans but still pretty tough. On the other side of this hill, we plummeted down a short but steep descent with a compression at the bottom and, shortly after

that, a right turn. It would have been dangerous in the icy conditions of the previous week but, with a lot of new snow, it seemed fine; there were, though, bum plant marks evident and, later in the week, as I was watching from the tent, I saw a few people fall on the way down.



Bronwen looks dynamic before illness struck her down



Helen stays ahead of the person warming up or down!

There was then an uphill loop involving Skate 1 but nowhere near as steep, following by a gentle downhill which led to the longest steep climb, possibly 500 metres or so long and which got steeper as it went up (all of this taking place in the open meadows). From the top of the climb, the track dropped, not particularly steeply but with a 90° corner at the bottom. After this there was another climbing and descending loop (shorter, this time), following by a good gentle downhill section at the end of which was a short, sharp uphill. It wasn't possible (at least not for me) to get up enough speed coming into this climb to get more than about half way up it. Following that, there were 90° right and left corners and another steep 5 metre or so drop, another short, sharp climb and then, dropping down from that, it was back onto the 5 kms.

That first section was all that I was able to do in the morning, but I went out and did it again, adding the section up towards Hochfilzen, in the evening when the tracks were in much better condition and I was skiing classic using that old, Swix yellow stick wax for icy tracks, which was working extremely well. To complete the picture, at what had been the high point of the 5 kms, the 10 and 15 km tracks continued up a long, steady, climb maybe 3 kms long, much of which was Skate 2able but with flatter and steeper sections, After this climb, the 10 km track looped by 180° and started descending on the other side of the valley it had come up. For the 15 km track which we were to use later in the week, the track continued on almost into Hochfilzen town, with gentle climbs and easy descents.

The downhill was uneventful at first but then, just when one thought that a long chute back down to the 5 km track was coming, it started climbing again for a few hundred metres, after which the decent became steeper with a couple of fast corners and a steep section back onto the 5 km track. There was plenty of time to be gained here, but also plenty to be lost if one went into a snowplough to get round the corners!

On the way back to the stadium, just before the climb up to the plateau, there was the additional, steepish, long climb (see the photo above), before dropping down again round a right hand corner and sharpish descent and then we had the same 1 km or so of the 5 km track up and down and back into the stadium. A number of people complained that this new track was too demanding but I didn't agree with this. The short, sharp descents were fine as long as one simply ran them and stayed reasonably in control, and the hills just had to be climbed at an appropriate rate. I didn't much like the two short, sharp climbs but this was simply because I could never get up enough speed to pop over them easily, and the uppermost section in Hochfilzen was a bit of a slog, especially when it was windy and the snow was soft. But there were no stupid corners, such as we'd seen in Rovaniemi or Autrans and, in the end, I liked this circuit a lot.

Back to Monday, and the 10 km classic in the morning, which dawned nice with a temperature when we arrived at the stadium at 08:15 of about $-0.5\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ and this temperature, with new snow, should have eliminated the usual grip wax panic. But panic was what ensued, because the temperature was rising quickly to maybe $+0.5\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ and the training tracks were glazed (the 'official' temperature, given in the results, showed $-2\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ but the official value was always somewhat lower than the true value). I'd waxed with a base binder and then Swix VR45, 0 to $-4\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ but this didn't work at all, so I added two layers of VR50 (for 0 to $+1\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$) and this seemed to work. I passed Martin on the way to the start, and he said that he was on blue stick. I couldn't verify this but, if it was true, I can almost guarantee that this would have provided no grip at all. As I returned to the tent, I met Patrick who advised me to put a harder wax over the VR50 which was, as it happens, exactly what I was aiming to do. But I had a very short time before my start and, although I started the job, I didn't have the time to finish it or indeed to do it properly, before I had to run to the start.

With fluoro powder on this time, I wasn't left so far behind as I'd been in the first skate race but, changing tracks just out of the start, whoops, down I went and, by the time I'd picked myself up, everyone else was well ahead. Still, I was reasonably happy all through the meadow section and, in fact, up until we started the long climb up towards Hochfilzen, when it all went very pear-shaped! The skis iced up as we started the climb, and I slowed to not much more than walking pace. I could see two people in my group in front of me, one of which was simply walking like a tourist. I struggled to catch them, and overtook the walker, but things just got worse and worse.

Everyone was coming past me, including the M06s. My friend Libor from the Czech Republic came past with a cheery "You've got the wrong wax", just in case I hadn't noticed. Then Hans also passed me and, I'm sorry, no disrespect, Hans, my friend, that wasn't in my pre-race thoughts! Any attempt to speed up just made things worse – if I tried double poling, I stopped, and if I tried kick-double-pole, it made the icing worse and I risked falling. The only thing keeping me going was the hope that, once we started going downhill, the skis might get better. But they didn't and so, with nothing left to lose, I stopped, took the skis off and scraped all the ice off with my baskets, letting the tourist pass in the process. After this, the skis glided better, but they'd also stopped gripping altogether. I couldn't catch the tourist and it was simply a case of struggling on to the finish. Disaster!

When I looked at my finish time, not much short of an hour, and later calculated my percentage, these simply confirmed what I knew already; my worst ever Masters performance which, coming after the disappointment of the 15 km skate earlier, was making thoughts of giving up skiing altogether and taking up running come seriously into my head. My guess, having seen his time, was that Martin had struggled, too, but in his case with a lack of grip. Maybe if we'd had half of each other's wax, on average we would have done rather better!

To finish the story of the classic race, bizarrely both Hans and Dagmar were on much the same wax as me, VR50, and neither of them reported any real problems. Dagmar, in particular, was happy, as she should have been with her second best Masters race, and I think that Hans was happy too even though, strangely because it was shorter (but it was also over the harder track) his race speed, and his percentage, were down on what he'd done in the 15 kms. Completing BMCCSA results came Patrick, happy that he'd followed his own waxing advice that he'd given me, but still managing his least good performance of this event.

Disappointed, there was only one thing left to do. Drive back to the hotel and, with Hans and Dagmar, take up residence in a nearby cafe and stuff myself full of cake (*was that one thing, or three? Ed.*). The chat, though, cheered me up somewhat, and I was very glad of the company.



If only we'd had one of these! This is the Norwegian World Cup team's double-decker waxing bus



Are these the world's largest cake portions? Who cares, they were so much better once inside!

By the way, I've calculated that if I raise your BMCCSA subscription by 10 (fold), in about 10 years we could just about afford the Norwegian double-decker waxing bus. Would you agree to this? Answers on a postcard, please.



Hans, with no waxing problems at all



Dagmar, with no waxing problems, either. Rats!

Men's M01-M06 10 km classic technique, Monday 27th January

Fastest	Christian Baldauf	AUT	M04	32:03.4	18.7 km/h		
29)	Martin Arnold	GBR	M04	57:13.5	10.5 km/h	78.5 %	(29 starters)
1)	Martin Furrer	SUI	M05	35:00.8	17.1 km/h		
40)	Adam Pinney	GBR	M05	57:35.3	10.4 km/h	64.5 %	(41 starters)
1)	Gianpaolo Englaro	ITA	M06	35:22.7	17.0 km/h		
40)	Hans Nilsson	GBR	M06	48:38.4	12.3 km/h	37.5 %	(44 starters)

Men's M07-M09 10 km classic technique, Monday 27th January

Fastest	Oddvar Vehusheia	NOR	M07	37:34.1	16.0 km/h		
1)	Alpo Virtanen	FIN	M09	38:50.7	15.4 km/h		
24)	Patrick o'Connor	USA	M09	1.05:51.5	9.1 km/h	69.5 %	(27 starters)

Ladies F01-F06 10 km classic technique, Monday 27th January

Fastest	Ragnhild Bolstad	NOR	F04	38:46.4	15.7 km/h		
1)	Nina Smakotina	RUS	F05	43:13.4	13.9 km/h		
15)	Dagmar Junghanns	GBR	F05	57:37.3	10.4 km/h	33.3 %	(17 starters)

While we were away stuffing ourselves, the other Brits and BMCCSA members were taking part in the 10 km freestyle race, starting in the afternoon. I heard no particular tales of drama, but results were varying: Peter F. improved on his first race performance, as did Jack, but everybody else was slightly worse, in percentage terms, than they'd been in the first races. Does this give us a clue that, as roller skiers, we're better on easier courses than hard ones (there was no doubt that the full 10 km course was a lot harder than two laps of the 5 km)? No, I don't think so.

Men's M01-M06 10 km free technique, Monday 27th January

Fastest	Norbert Ganner	AUT	M04	29:32.5	20.3 km/h		
1)	Andrey Tonkov	RUS	M03	30:05.4	19.9 km/h		
32)	Peter Fairhurst	GBR	M03	40:46.1	14.7 km/h	35.5 %	
35)	Alistair Brown	GBR	M03	45:44.5	13.1 km/h	52.0 %	(36 starters)
1)	Alexander Abramov	RUS	M05	30:10.4	19.9 km/h		
24)	Peter Moysey	NZL	M05	34:47.2	17.2 km/h	15.3 %	(48 starters)
1)	Guido Masiero	ITA	M06	31:39.9	18.9 km/h		
46)	Brian Adams	GBR	M06	39:49.5	15.1 km/h	25.8 %	
59)	Chris Donnelly	GBR	M06	44:40.5	13.4 km/h	41.1 %	
63)	Alasdair Wilson	GBR	M06	46:06.8	13.0 km/h	45.6 %	(68 starters)



Skiing in short sleeves while it snows? It can only be Alistair, setting the style for Sochi

Fastest British lady on the day, and only one place outside the real medals, Jenny

Once more, Jenny came out best, in terms of race time, of the British ladies but, again, she missed out to Bronwen in percentage terms and therefore gets a lower ranking on the best-of-all-time list. Some people complained that this was the second 10 km race that the ladies had done (which was true), but the tracks for the two races were so very different that I don't think they can be considered to be the 'same' race. Sadly, this was Bronwen's last race, because illness put paid to her after this. Shame, too, that Helen was put off by the first sharp descent and so pulled out of the race quite early on. Strange, really, because after this, she and Dagmar went off to race the British Championships in Ruhpolding, a course which I would say is a lot more difficult than the Pillerseetal one!

Ladies F01-F06 10 km free technique, Monday 27th January

Fastest	Elena Mizonova	RUS	F01	32:56.9	18.2 km/h		
4)	Jenny Munro	GBR	F01	46:32.3	12.9 km/h	41.2 %	(4 starters)
1)	Viktoria Moiseeva	RUS	F02	34:52.0	17.2 km/h		
7)	Bronwen Steiner	GBR	F02	48:00.6	12.5 km/h	37.7 %	(7 starters)
1)	Bernadette Roche	FRA	F05	36:25.7	16.5 km/h		
	Helen Murray	GBR	F05	DNF			

Men's M07-M09 10 km free technique, Monday 27th January

Fastest	Marcus Florinett	SUI	M07	33:10.7	18.1 km/h		
66)	Godfrey Rhimes	GBR	M07	54:17.4	11.1 km/h	63.7 %	(67 starters)
1)	Giuliano Secco	ITA	M08	34:11.2	17.6 km/h		
38)	Steve Smigiel	USA	M08	42:57.5	14.0 km/h	25.7 %	(56 starters)
1)	Andre Grob	FRA	M09	36:26.0	16.5 km/h		
9)	Jack White	CAN	M09	42:12.8	14.2 km/h	15.9 %	(34 starters)

After the rest day on Tuesday came the relays on the Wednesday. I'd thought and hoped that we might have two men's teams but, needing at least two skiers in the age category entered, and Alastair having left already, this just wasn't possible. We did, though, *enter* a genuine British Ladies team, for the first time ever but, sadly, Bronwen's illness meant that the team never quite made it to the start line.

There is always a good rivalry between us and the Australians in the individual races, and this continued into the relay where the Aussies also had a team in the same age category as the British team. What this meant was some exciting racing, towards the end. Brian, on the first classic leg, skied well and was more than one and a half minutes ahead of Adrian Blake, first off for the Aussies (Brian was, also, only 3 seconds behind the French and 6 second behind the Norwegians!). Hans, too, skied well, and extended the lead over Zac Zacharias, who is more of a skater than a classic skier. But then the roles started to be reversed; Chris lost more than a minute to the third Aussie, so the honour of Britain came down to Alasdair on the last leg. Could he stay ahead, we wondered, against Friedl Bartsch, the strongest of their team? Well, of course he could and despite losing more than a minute and a half, Alastair skied competently and well (and only one second slower than Chris) and, in the end, GB was almost a minute ahead. It's always good when we beat another team in the relay!

Men's M01-M06 4 x 5 km classic/free technique relay, Wednesday 29th January

Fastest	M01	RUS	48:42.7				
1)	M06	ITA	53:32.2				
13)	M06	GBR	1.10:34.6	Brian Adams	16:26.0		
				Hans Nilsson	18:37.1		
				Chris Donnelly	17:45.3		
				Alasdair Wilson	17:46.1	31.8 %	(14 starters)
1)	M07	GER	55:32.1				
8)	M07	USA	1.05:11.7	Clifford Onthank	15:26.0		
				Guy Thibodeau	16:38.7		
				Steve Smigiel	17:49.7		
				Don Camp	15:17.2	17.4 %	(9 starters)
Fastest	F01	RUS	59:23.5				
	F01	GBR	DNF	Bronwen Steiner	Dagmar Junghanns		
				Helen Murray	Jenny Munro		

That evening, we were invited to their hotel by some of the Canadian team, including BMCCSA member Jack, because they were staying in a hotel just across the road from us in Waidring. A nice gesture, guys, thanks, because it's always good to get together socially with the chance to talk about other things than just the immediate concerns of the races, and this rounded off the day very nicely!



The victorious (well, over our Commonwealth rivals if no other team) GB relay team



Chris nears the finish. Note how much better the tracks are than they'd been earlier in the event

For the long classic race, the weather was ideal, if the temperature wasn't! The spectators were numerous and enjoying the sun, while the temperature rose during the day from about -7°C to $+2^{\circ}\text{C}$ at the end (according to the official results – I'd have put it maybe 2°C higher), and this is quite a wide range to wax for! Despite this, our three BMCCSA men and one BMCCSA lady (Helen deciding not to start this race), seemed to have fun and I heard no complaints. For some reason, the last lap of the long race always seems to be a lot longer than the first one, and there were some tired skiers coming up the final few hills leading to the finish! On his last lap, we (the British crowd) were able to see Hans at the top of the hill still 2 kms or so from home, and we yelled our encouragement across the valley – no idea whether he heard us or not!

Men's M01-M06 45 km classic technique, Thursday 30th January

Fastest	Christian Baldauf	AUT	M04	2.08:28.8	21.0 km/h		
1)	Martin Furrer	SUI	M05	2.18:58.5	19.6 km/h		
18)	Peter Moysey	NZL	M05	2.50:30.2	15.3 km/h	23.5 %	(30 starters)
1)	Gianpaolo Englaro	ITA	M06	2.25:29.0	18.6 km/h		
31)	Hans Nilsson	GBR	M06	3.44:45.3	12.1 km/h	54.5 %	(34 starters)

Men's M07-M09 30 km classic technique, Thursday 30th January

Fastest	Alexei Khvostov	RUS	M07	1.39:44.7	18.0 km/h		
1)	Ola Kvaale	NOR	M09	1.47:04.2	16.8 km/h		
21)	Patrick o'Connor	USA	M09	2.59:00.0	10.1 km/h	67.2 %	(24 starters)

Ladies F01-F06 30 km classic technique, Thursday 30th January

Fastest	Sirkka Ehrnrooth	FIN	F06	1.42:54.2	17.5 km/h		
1)	Mara Zamboni	ITA	F05	1.53:30.0	15.9 km/h		
12)	Dagmar Junghanns	GBR	F05	2.34:22.0	11.7 km/h	36.0 %	(14 starters)
	Helen Murray	GBR	F05	DNS			



Peter Moysey descends towards the stadium



Patrick maybe wishing that the finish was rather nearer to where he is than it is!

And then finally we came to the last race, 45/30 km skate in nice, warm conditions. No waxing issues on this day, but care had to be taken with clothing to avoid overheating! We had a good turnout of British Masters for this final race, although illness had already taken out Bronwen and it also put paid to Jenny which meant that we had no lady representatives. If only Jenny had been healthy, and had raced in the 30 km classic race the day before (something I've always encouraged our younger ladies to do), there was a guaranteed bronze medal waiting, which would have tied in nicely with it also being a British gold medal! The track had been made a bit easier for the longer races, with the second uphill loop in the meadow removed. Although this was perhaps only 200 metres or so in distance, I think that it made a big difference to the difficulty, especially later on in the race.

The start order for the longer races is reversed, so the M06s, in our case Brian, Chris and Alasdair, went off first, me five minutes later, chased by Martin and, five minutes after him, Peter (Alistair had already left and so wasn't able to race). For me, this had to be a better race than my two earlier disasters because, otherwise, my career as a promising ski racer was over! But, as it happens, despite all of my Masters events over the years, I'd never raced this distance in free technique. In fact, apart from the Transjurassienne many years ago, and the London Region 4 hour roller ski race, I'd never skated this far in my life. So, however it turned out, it was going to be both my best and my worst performance over the distance.

The start went well, the wax felt good and, all through the meadow section, I was skiing with people. A few of my rivals started up the long hill in the meadow quite quickly but then tired as the climb went on, and I was able to catch them, which was reassuring but, because I've always found the long race to be a struggle, I was determined to take things easy at first. As we came to the last steep drop of the meadows, though, someone called for me to get out of his way (why he couldn't have waited the 3 seconds before we were down the hill remains a mystery), so I obliged and tried to move over. In doing so, though, I slightly lost my footing and shot off into the soft stuff at the side of the little uphill. Rats! This meant that I lost the small group that I was with but I don't know whether this was a good or a bad thing. It certainly meant that I spent the next one and a half laps almost entirely on my own but, on the other hand, it meant that I could go at my own pace. The time I lost while lying in the snow (some might call it resting), though, could have been decisive in my battle with Chris ahead of me.

As I was about to go down the same short drop on the second lap, I saw Martin climbing the first steep hill into the meadow, and I started to calculate whether this meant that we were still five minutes apart, whether he'd caught up on me or whether I was ahead of him. I think that it was just the latter but, in fact, it proved academic because, not long after, Martin retired. Things were only slightly upset by Peter F. steaming past me at a hairy rate of knots and, although I kept him in sight for a while, I'd have blown up if I'd attempted to match his speed. I shouldn't have worried, though, because Peter was on a real flier, producing his best performance of the event and also setting the fastest time of us all. As if to prove his undoubted fitness, he

went on to finish first Brit in the Oppet Spar (part of the Vaasaloppet week and over the same distance) and third best Brit in the World half marathon running championships in Copenhagen. The only place where I had any real difficulty was up towards Hochfiltzen, where there was one short section of soft snow which hadn't been well pisted and I briefly didn't know whether I was still fully on the course. But apart from this, the tracks remained firm and in good condition throughout the race, despite the quite high temperature.

Starting the last lap, things began to improve. Up the long hill in the meadow I managed to catch and overtake two people in my category and, because I was sure that there was at least one other person behind me, this meant no British medal for me. I passed another person on the climb towards Hochfiltzen, and then saw Alasdair stopped by the trackside taking a drink. He stuck behind me for a while but I was able to pull ahead going through Hochfiltzen. After that, it was carefully down the through the steep turns and then on to the finish where I met up with Godfrey and Chris who, it turned out, had beaten me by approximately the same amount of time as I used up in my fall.

Men's M01-M06 45 km free technique, Friday 31st January

Fastest	Pavel Arkhipkin	RUS	M01	2.01:58.4	22.1 km/h		
1)	Aleksandr Pushkarev	RUS	M03	2.03:59.8	21.8 km/h		
21)	Peter Fairhurst	GBR	M03	2.45:55.1	16.3 km/h	33.8 %	(24 starters)
	Alistair Brown	GBR	M03	DNS			
1)	Norbert Ganner	AUT	M04	2.08:32.0	21.0 km/h		
	Martin Arnold	GBR	M04	DNF			
1)	Alexander Abramov	RUS	M05	2.07:31.8	21.2 km/h		
39)	Adam Pinney	GBR	M05	3.09:07.1	14.3 km/h	48.3 %	(49 starters)
1)	Guido Masiero	ITA	M06	2.12:31.7	20.4 km/h		
30)	Brian Adams	GBR	M06	2.48:35.9	16.0 km/h	27.2 %	
45)	Chris Donnelly	GBR	M06	3.08:04.3	14.4 km/h	41.9 %	
49)	Alasdair Wilson	GBR	M06	3.15:39.3	13.8 km/h	47.7 %	(60 starters)

Ladies F01-F06 30 km free technique, Friday 31st January

Fastest	Elena Mizonova	RUS	F01	1.31:50.2	19.6 km/h		
	Jenny Munro	GBR	F01	DNS			
1)	Terhi Maki	FIN	F02	1.38:23.4	18.3 km/h		
	Bronwen Steiner	GBR	F02	DNS			

Men's M07-M09 30 km free technique, Friday 31st January

Fastest	Sakari Matikainen	FIN	M07	1.31:31.8	19.7 km/h		
45)	Godfrey Rhimes	GBR	M07	2.10:05.3	13.8 km/h	42.1 %	
50)	Gareth Buffett	GBR	M07	2.44:51.3	10.9 km/h	80.2 %	(57 starters)
1)	Andre Escoffier	FRA	M08	1.35:26.0	14.1 km/h		
28)	Steve Smigiel	USA	M08	1.56:18.0	15.5 km/h	21.9 %	(49 starters)
1)	Andre Grob	FRA	M09	1.45:17.3	17.1 km/h		
8)	Jack White	CAN	M09	1.55:00.0	15.7 km/h	9.2 %	(21 starters)

Among our older members, there were some fantastic performances! Godfrey had decided to invest in a new pair of Fischer skis, which he did. I don't know what agreement Godfrey has with Mrs. Godfrey about the purchase of new equipment but if, as happens in all successful relationships, it's along the lines of "You can buy whatever you like, my love, as long as it's justified", then Godfrey was determined to prove his purchase justified! Despite the usual advice that skis need to be waxed several times before they go well, he

too was flying and his 42.1 % was not only his best Masters performance ever, it also put him ahead, in percentage terms, of me and Alasdair. Ha (“*Don’t laugh!*” ze German police), he can drive himself in the future! Also in the same category came Gareth Buffett, who had only joined us relatively late in the event and, therefore, was possibly hampered by having very little time to practice around the tracks.

Steve Smigiel was also performing solidly; not quite his best but he managed to put a lot of people behind him. This comes from having a back yard half the size of his home state of Michigan, and plenty of snow to practice on around it. But by far the best BMCCSA performance came from Jack White, who skied magnificently to finish 8th out of 21 starters, and his 9.2 % puts him second best on our all-time list, only being beaten by the performances of Norman Clark. It’s just a shame that we never manage to get any photos of either Steve or Jack, because they certainly deserve to feature in this Newsletter! The high number of DNFs, though, meant that none of us collected any British medals. The high numbers of DNSs, in both this and the classic race, illustrated the fact that quite a large number of people had fallen ill by the end of the event and, also, I suspect, that many people feared that the conditions were going to be a lot harder than they were.

The banquet at the end of things was good, too. Plenty of food, good company (although some Brits had left by this time) and visits from Patrick, Steve and some bonkers lady from the US, brought a good event to its conclusion!



Peter Fairhurst at the end of his triumphant 45 kms of skating



Our comfortable hotel in Waidring, in energy wasting mode!

In summary, despite my hopeless performances, I enjoyed this event a great deal. The organisers were perhaps lucky, in a generally bad snow year, that they were able to hold the event at all, and then they were extremely lucky that snow came in large quantities just before the racing started (leaving aside the problems this caused with grip waxing!). The hotel was good, with plenty of good food, both for breakfast and in the evening, and we were entertained by the Italian waiter who, on the face of it, was jolly, friendly and happy but who seemed to disapprove of just about everything we did. We had plenty of cars between us, so the fact that we were 10 kms or so from the track, combined with a good bus service, meant no problems in that area. The company was excellent, there were no stupid sections of the course to worry about, and it was fun! One of the best Masters I’ve ever been to. Russia next year could be just as much fun! Perhaps we should leave the last word, on the event, to Hans, who was competing in his first ever Masters:

“Dear Adam,

Thank you ever so much for organising a wonderful week. Everything was just great and by far the best skiing experience for me.

Great company and plenty of laughter made the spare time equally enjoyable.”

On the way home, Godfrey and I had another experience which was only amusing looking back at it, although it's difficult to rank it relative to the police experience on the way out. Because we had an early morning Shuttle booking on Sunday, we had to get all the way to Calais on Saturday evening. The traffic heading in to Munich was desperate, so we turned off the motorway, took a detour south of the city and, after that, we were making very good progress. Heading through Belgium, we decided to stop for fuel and something to eat so, in a motorway service station, we filled up and then parked right outside the restaurant. Having eaten, we returned to the car, only to find that it had GONE! Disaster! We both agreed that we were where we'd parked it, because we recognised the landscape, but it most definitely wasn't there. All sorts of thoughts went through my head: who the hell would steal a crappy old car with 150 000 miles on the clock, how were we going to get home, what about my passport and all the cash people had paid me for the hotel, what about my ski equipment and all of Godfrey's, etc., etc.?

There was nothing to do but return to the restaurant and ask for the police to be called. But the lady was very reassuring, saying that "No, the car has not been stolen", although we told her that it was clearly gone. She then went on to tell us that they have one or two cars 'stolen' every day, for the very simple reason that there are actually two parking areas, one on either side of the building, and they are *identical*. All we had to do was exit the building by exactly the same door by which we had come in (as opposed to the other one) and there our car would be. So we did, and it was! Phew x 1 000. But who the **** designs a motorway service station in this way, and we wondered just how much the architect and/or the restaurant staff must laugh every time a customer reports their car stolen!