

Masters World Championships, Voukatti, Finland, February 2024

The destination: Finland MWC; the time: Day 1 or, to be more precise, Day -2, because we're talking about Wednesday whereas the event itself didn't actually start officially until Friday; the place: Dunstable; the action: I was lying in bed going through the trip for possibly the 100th time in my head: if I get up at 07:00, have breakfast, leaving the house at 07:45, I'll be at the bus stop by 08:00, meaning that the latest bus I'd get would be 08:15, so I'll be in Luton at 08:30, giving me tonnes of time to catch the 08:59 train to Gatport Airwick for the flight at 13:00 What was I doing? I'd been through this loads of times! And why was I doing this, when I knew that I'd have plenty of time and what I should actually be doing was forgetting to pack my toothbrush and toothpaste (a task in which I succeeded with aplomb).

As it was, my 08:59 train was cancelled (lucky that I'd been panicking, then) but, because of this, they allowed me onto an *earlier* (and more expensive, but not to me, train – result!), and I was at the airport with three hours to spare. From then on, the trip to Helsinki was uneventful: Norwegian Airlines to Stockholm, easy transfer to the Helsinki flight and, when I arrived in Helsinki, so did my ski bag! Then it was a short walk to the train station, three stops to my overnight destination, and a rather cold walk, carrying a heavy ski bag, in completely the wrong direction, *away* from my accommodation. Luckily I stopped and asked directions from a nice man with a car, and he drove me to where I needed to go, but the delay meant that I just missed the pizzeria, which closed as I was 10 metres from the door, and it also meant that I missed the supermarket, both closed at 9 p.m. So, despite being ravenous, it was into the local bar for a panini and a beer. Simon and wife Lauren had arrived safely, too, via Edinburgh and Amsterdam and, although we didn't know it, they were staying just a short way down the road from me.

Day -1: walked to the wrong railway station, which turned out to be the right railway station! I was aiming for the station I'd got off at the previous evening, but went in the wrong direction and landed up at one station further down the line, Tikkurila, which was the interchange for the train to Kajaani. Despite the cold, around -15 °C, I was sweating carrying my ski bag! Simon, Lauren and I were all on the same train, but we didn't meet up – all this socialising is very over-rated, after all! Five and a half hours of rolling majestically through the beautiful Finnish countryside and we arrived in Kajaani, where the taxi was waiting for us and, half an hour or so later, we were standing in Reception, checking in to our 'chalet', which was somewhat inappropriately named because it was actually a two-bedroom flat in an apartment block, pretty much exactly where we'd stayed in 2016, overlooking the lake. It was at Reception that I learnt that, owing to WMA generosity, I'd be given half board – yippee, Result No. 2, but not so good for Simon and Lauren, with whom I'd previously been intending to share the cooking. But that's life when one is National Director; as the old saying goes, "into every reign a little life must fall".

On the train on the way up, and that evening, there was discussion going on, on WhatErp and face-to-face, about how the first two days, Sunday and Monday, both of which had two races in the day, classic in the morning and skate in the afternoon, might pan out. The temperature limit for an MWC is -20 °C, mainly for safety reasons especially for older skiers, and if the classic races in the morning had to be delayed to allow for things to warm up, there wouldn't be enough time to get the afternoon's skate races done before it got dark in the afternoon. We'll be back to this topic soon, dear listeners.

Day -30; no, this is not a temporal reference but a temperatural (new word alert) reference. Yes, boys and girls, when we awoke on Friday morning the mercury has almost entirely disappeared back into its bowl so, as the saying goes, "When the going gets tough, the tough go ... shopping", which is exactly what we did, to the supermarket which was (and still is) about a mile away. It had warmed up considerably by the time we got back (just -27 °C, 10 % warmer – thinking of you, Brian!), so there was no more to be done than apply the coldest grip wax available and head out to the tracks.

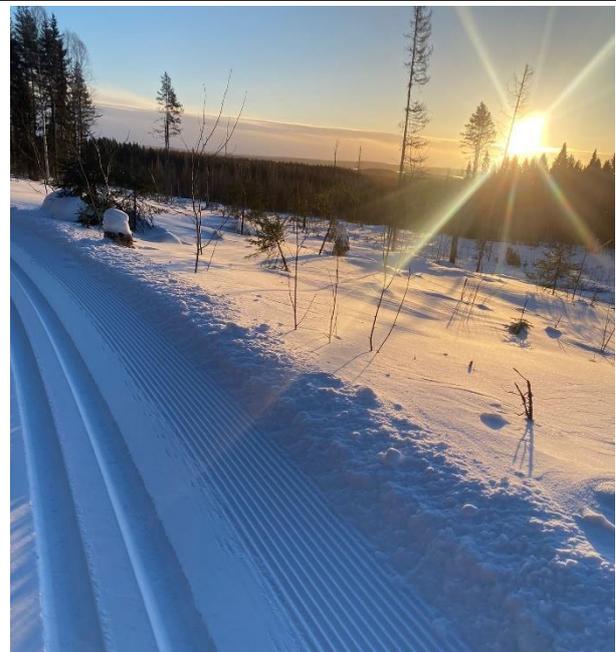
For those of you who remember the event in 2016, the start area was right in front of our apartment building, about 20 metres from the front door. This was no longer the case, because the start had been moved by about 500 metres to the other side of the main road. But the old start area was still where we started, because this allowed us to ski to the race tracks without all that business of a cold walk carrying skis.



See? This is not Mr. C. Nesbitt as the jacket implies but, instead, Mrs. L. Bate



'Solid' perhaps best describes the Day 1 tracks, but they were very clearly marked



The sun reaches its high point on the extremely well-prepare course

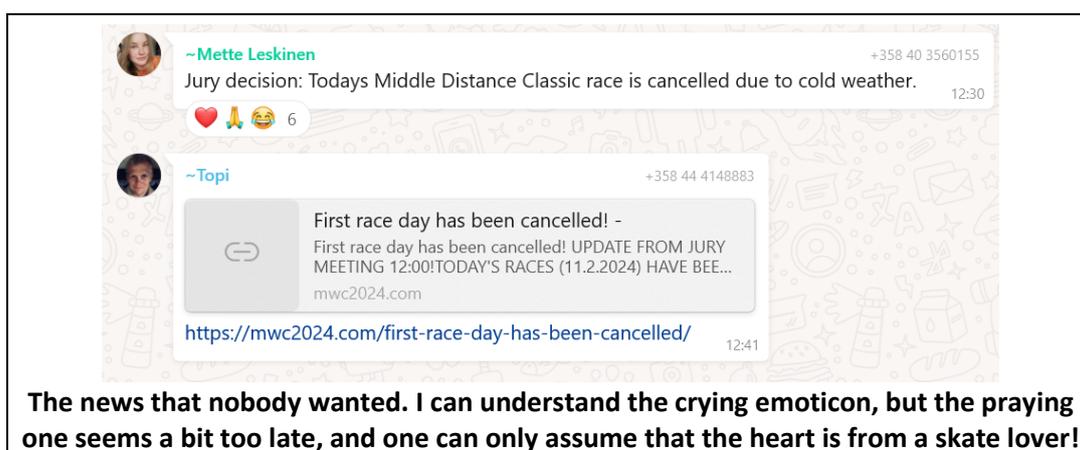
What can I tell you about the tracks? They were hard packed but well-marked, the start (unusually) took us down a short drop to the side of a little lake and then there was the first modest climb of about 200 metres and, after that ... they just meandered around, up and down, up and down, up and down, through the Finnish forest. The first serious turn took us down through the tunnel under the road (a little care would be needed at this point) and, some time later, there was another tunnel which took us back under the road (but this one had tracks through it) and that was about it. There were no steep, long climbs, and what climbs there were (and there were many!) could all be climbed in the tracks using diagonal stride; most of the descents ended with a slight uphill and all of them could be run in the tracks; there were a few tight corners but these were all approached at slow speed and were easy. It was almost impossible to fix the layout in one's head and recall it later, because one section looked very much like the next. This was a roller skier's track, without a doubt and, in fact, I wondered whether they'd made it deliberately easy to compensate for the tough tracks of Seefeld last year, so that people could look back and say "On average, the conditions of both venues were about right".

Kelley and Peter and his wife Ada rolled into town that evening, Jon, and Chris and Janet from the US had been in Vuokatti for a number of days already, Janet not particularly enjoying the hard tracks and equally hard skating conditions.

Day 2, modestly warm, about -15 °C and, because this was the day before my first race, I'd decided on just one lap of the 10 km loop. This was, in fact, the same as the 7.5 km track but with an additional 2.5 km added so, by doing it, I'd also be doing the 7.5 km track used for my first race. They'd groomed the tracks the night before, and this made a big difference! The corners were now soft, so getting down through the two tunnels was a pleasure, and they'd removed the sharp, icy corner where, previously, skis had ground their way round in the solid tracks; a great improvement. But the course seemed harder on this day, with more herring bone sections than I could remember from the day before; was I tired, was the warmer temperature making the wax less grippy, or was I actually taking it properly easy the day before Race 1? Answers on a postcard, please. Although the courses were well marked, one had to see the signs for them to be of any use, and Kelley didn't! So rather than learning the race tracks, she went off on an inadvertent tour to the supermarket, having turned left rather than right at a key point (the beginning)!

The Team Captains' meeting that afternoon proved what many people had feared. The morning temperatures on Sunday and Monday (-28 °C) were going to be too cold for racing, so a major change to the schedule was made. The middle-distance classic race would start at 12:00 on Sunday (when it was predicted to be -19 °C), and the short free technique race was brought forward to Monday, also at 12:00. This was a little contentious but was intended to suit the large number of Finnish racers who'd planned to stay only a few days in Vuokatti. The relays were brought forward to Tuesday, meaning two races, short classic and middle-distance free technique on Wednesday. Anyone who'd entered both, thinking that they'd be on different days (Kelley and Janet in our case) were allowed to change to another race. The two long distance races were unchanged. The best of a tricky situation, really, but what a difference compared with 2016, at the same time of year, when it had been around 0 to -5 °C all week!

Day 3, or Day -24, as you prefer; most people getting ready, and nervous, for the first, middle-distance, classic race. Me, wondering exactly what to wear with a predicted temperature of -19 °C, because I've never raced at such a low temperature. I went for two thermals below my race suit bottoms, and four layers on the upper body, together with balaclava (essential) and thick hat. But then the news came – race postponed by an hour, because of low temperatures. So we tried to psyche ourselves down a bit, by watching the 4 x 5 km mixed relay from the Junior World Championships in Planica, Slovenia, where it was +4 °C and raining. The hour ground slowly past, and Simon and Lauren set off for the start, and then came the news that nobody wanted to hear. Oh well, when the going gets tough, the tough ... have lunch!



Day -32, or Monday. With the mercury at -32 °C when we awoke, the news was effectively inevitable. The Jury met at 11:45 to consider the situation and we only had to wait until 11:55 for the news to come out – short free technique race cancelled. The decision the previous day, while broadly accepted, was a little contentious; Kelley and I went out and completed one lap of the 10 km track and, with appropriate clothing, it is eminently skiable. I also talked to a few people who believed that we could easily have raced, and these people also pointed out that they'd raced in colder conditions in the past. Today's decision met no such

contention; the temperature at 11:00 was still -26 °C, and it was bitterly cold, and things didn't really improve until about 15:00 when the temperature finally crept up to about -20 °C. But don't these decision-makers realise how tricky the life of us over-stressed Newsletter editors is? How do we fill our Newsletters if they don't hold races so that we have something to report on?

Later that afternoon, though, and we finally got some good news. There was a 'window of warmth' from lunchtime on Tuesday until sundown, so we were off! Two races, one almost immediately after the other, classic starting at 1:00 p.m. and then free technique at 2:45 p.m. With not much time, though, both races were radically reduced in distance to just 5 km each (3 km for older skiers), the shortest races ever held at an MWC. Still, beggars can't be choosers.

Even at 13:00 it still felt rather cold, especially out of the sun, which was quite bright. This was the first time that I'd been to the warm-up hall and start area. The former was huge and warm, with the only possible criticism being that there was just one toilet for men. There were, though, additional toilets near the start, and I didn't see any queues. First off were Simon and Chris, followed a few minutes later by Kelley and then Janet, and then Peter and I were the last to start at 13:30. Simon was already in the finish area as I was going into the start, so his time must have been impressive, and Chris was only one place behind WMA president and former US National Team Member John Downing.

The start, unusually, was downhill, with the 10 start lanes being lifted a short while after the start, before two tracks took us up the first hill. There were no difficulties on the downhill section but, as we came to the start of the climb, the line of skiers I was in came to a complete halt, and I skied right up the backside of the man in front of me! There was only a halt of a second or two, but it meant that Peter was, by the time I got going again, maybe 20 metres ahead. Never mind, my plan was to slowly catch him but, sadly, things went in the other direction, and he slowly pulled away from me. The rest of the race was uneventful; I was briefly in a battle with a Frenchman, who was on faster skis going downhill, but I was able to catch and pass him on the uphill, until he finally pulled away about half way into the race. There was only one annoyance, towards the end, as I came up behind an older lady skier. With 1 kilometre to go, I was 11 seconds ahead of my Norwegian rival (who, for some reason, skis for USA). As I approached the lady, I had two options: go left and stay in the classic tracks or go right and run past her on the skate track. I opted for the latter, but she sped up towards the top of the hill and blocked my entry back into the tracks. So I had to ski the whole way down the hill out of them.

About half a kilometre of flat followed, before the steep climb up to the finish where my rival ran past me, and I wasn't able to catch and get by again. That was annoying, and it's difficult to believe that I'd lost 11 seconds in one kilometre! I asked Janet the following day how she's enjoyed her race, and her response was "It was okay". She then went on to say that she wouldn't tell me what she'd really thought, so it seems that this will forever remain a secret.



Short distance classic technique, Tuesday 13th February

Men's M01-M09 5 km

Fastest	Jukka Palo	FIN	M02	11:53.8	25.2 km/h		
1)	Valdis Bodnieks	LAT	M03	12:36.6	23.8 km/h		
7)	Simon Bate	GBR	M03	18:41.0	16.1 km/h	48.3 %	(7 starters)
1)	Gian Jörger	CH	M06	12:35.2	23.8 km/h		
19)	Chris Maund	GBR	M06	16:36.9	18.1 km/h	31.7 %	(23 starters)
1)	Harri Ala-Lahti	FIN	M07	12:57.4	23.2 km/h		
18)	Peter Drew	GBR	M07	17:20.1	17.3 km/h	33.8 %	
23)	Adam Pinney	GBR	M07	18:20.7	16.4 km/h	41.5 %	(24 starters)

Ladies F01-F09 5 km

Fastest	Laura Karkkulainen	FIN	F01	14:17.4	21.0 km/h		
1)	Catrin Ingvarsson	SWE	F04	14:51.6	20.2 km/h		
4)	Kelley Haniver	GBR	F04	17:37.8	17.0 km/h	18.5 %	(6 starters)
1)	Tuula Rasimus	FIN	F07	16:18.3	18.4 km/h		
9)	Janet Alexander	NZL	F07	20:10.0	14.9 km/h	23.7 %	(11 starters)

Because of the cancellation of earlier races, people were allowed to enter both the classic and the free technique race on the same day, and a few people took up this offer, even if there wasn't much time, after the end of the classic race, to recover prior to the free technique. Simon gave it a go, using skate-length poles but still fundamentally on classic skis, and his time was just 2 seconds slower. Chris, perhaps interestingly, was only 7 seconds faster in the second race, and several people commented that skating on the hard-packed tracks was tough going, although Kelley, stronger in skate than classic, proved them wrong by being more than one minute faster, although her finish position went from a frustrating fourth in the classic race to a more 'comfortable' (i.e. no "What if?" thoughts) 7th place. Kelley had been in third place going up the first hill, but there were a lot of fast Finns in her category (she was, in fact, the only non-Finn), and all but one of them got past her. This was Jon's first outing of the event, and his 65.5 % of the winner's time was only marginally down on his best performance from Seefeld the previous year.

Short distance free technique, Tuesday 13th February

Men's M01-M09 5 km

Fastest	Aki Kauppinen	FIN	M02	11:02.6	27.1 km/h		
1)	Vesa Tiihonen	FIN	M03	12:36.6	23.8 km/h		
10)	Simon Bate	GBR	M03	18:42.8	16.0 km/h	48.4 %	(10 starters)
1)	Niklas Westerlund	FIN	M04	11:23.9	26.3 km/h		
14)	Jon Bowskill	GBR	M04	18:51.2	15.9 km/h	65.5 %	(14 starters)
1)	Simo Törnvall	FIN	M06	12:01.2	25.0 km/h		
25)	Chris Maund	GBR	M06	16:29.5	18.2 km/h	37.5 %	(26 starters)
Fastest	Laura Karkkulainen	FIN	F01	12:26.1	24.1 km/h		
1)	Maija Leena Nivela	FIN	F04	13:21.9	22.4 km/h		
7)	Kelley Haniver	GBR	F04	16:27.3	18.2 km/h	23.1 %	(8 starters)

The following day was Relay Day, and we were able to field a genuine British Men's M04 team, comprising Peter, me, Chris and Jon. The weather was a little warmer than on previous days, around -12 °C when we set off at 13:30, and I had no issues with the cold on this day. First off was Peter, in his extremely easy to identify race suit and, for a while, we were in with a chance but, I'm afraid to say, none of us was faster than our leg rivals. It's not how fast you are, though, but how sincere, and on that basis we were worthy winners!



Peter, about 150 metres from the start and, at this point, we were ahead of the US but he, sadly, was in another category

Fastest	M04	FIN A	46:34.0					
7)	M04	GBR	1.07:40.8	Peter Drew	16:36.1	Adam Pinney	18:02.7	
				Chris Maund	15:35.0	Jon Bowskill	17:27.0	45.4 % (7 starters)

We were well beaten, but there was interest right at the death, as anchor-man Jon sprinted up the final hill to the finish. Could he beat a rival (forget the fact that they were in different age groups, this was competition!)? Well, follow the photos below to find out:



100 metres to go and Jon has a 10 metre lead



75 metres to go, and they're level



50 metres to go and ... awwww

Not one day later, and we were lining up for the long classic races, starting at 11:35 for Peter and I, when it was about -12 °C. Later starts are nice in that they don't require an early breakfast, but their disadvantage is that one has a lot of time to wait and get nervous, during which time there's nothing much else to do but tease one's flat mate! Some more modern bindings have the possibility to slide the unit backwards (for more grip) or forwards (for more speed), so Simon had decided to move his bindings back a notch for additional grip, and perform a *top* glide wax to his skin skis. I'd persuaded him to invest in some better-quality liquid glide wax, so he went for his cheaper liquid glider first, with the more expensive glider on top, all polished with kitchen roll after his special polishing tool broke. I'd already, the previous evening, done the usual Kuzmin scrape (cold scraper) and polish of my skis in the nearby communal waxing house. This was very well-provided, with 14 profiles and never more than one or two other people there, so we never needed to go anywhere near the waxing cabin which had been provided for us.

I walked up to the start area imagining that I'd need about 15 minutes to warm up, where I met Peter. The warm-up indicated that the grip wax could perhaps do with being a little more grippy, so it was time for some Desperation Waxing. We all know what Desperation Waxing is; it's that last additional layer we add to a perfectly good initial wax job which makes it worse! So I added a short layer of warmer wax, to be on the safe side, and subsequently regretted it because, towards the end of the race, I could feel the skis dragging a little. Simon, meanwhile, had reconsidered and gone in the other direction, moving his bindings forward a notch, for more glide.

30 km is a much more sensible distance; I can't be doing with these 5 km sprints because I'm only just getting going and the race is over! That said, everybody else in the M07 category set off as if they were doing a 5 km race and it seemed to me that I was soon at the back. But I was enjoying things, the tracks were great, I had good grip and, when people came past me from time to time, I could judge that my glide was good enough, too. I even sped up a little, starting the second lap although Peter, who was ahead of me right from the start, was away in the distance. We waved to each other when we met briefly as our loops came close to each other, not long after I'd waved to Simon who'd started almost an hour later. I didn't see anyone else from the GBR/NZ team, though, even if we were all out racing on the same day.



My first objective was to catch and pass my Danish National Director colleague Arne Stonor, who'd started five minutes ahead, and this was achieved on the first climb starting the second lap. It was to no avail, though, because he, like a few others, was DSQd for taking the wrong route. Thinking that I was last, it was very exciting when, half way round the final lap, I caught and passed a fellow M07, phew! I needn't have worried, though, unbeknown to me, there were three other M07s who'd been behind all along.

Despite this being the warmest day of the week so far, with temperatures *rocketing* to the heights of -9 °C at the end, it was still cold and, despite having five layers on my upper body and three layers on my legs, my left hand was cold from half way around the first lap. It got no worse, though, but I couldn't get it warm and, when we'd finished, it was painful for a minute or so as it thawed out. Simon, I later heard, found this distance challenging, and noted that as his average heart rate per lap went down, his average time per lap was going up! It was just a shame that he scored the second-best finish position (fifth, only one behind Kelley's fourth) of the whole event, but still had no one behind him! There were small fields for this race to start with, and a lot of DNSs. No matter, 40 laps of the Huntly circuit should prepare you nicely for future 30 km races, Simon!



Chris sensibly dressed for the conditions, and at least smiling below the tape which was much on display throughout the week

Kelley, who'd started 20 minutes after Peter and I, subsequently described the race as "average" and, indeed, in terms of percentage of the winner's time, it was her least-good of the week. For Janet, happier in classic than skate (*hooray, Ed.*), this was her second-best performance, the same for partner Chris, who'd opted for the dress-warmly approach.

Long distance classic technique, Thursday 15th February

Men's M01-M09 30 km

Fastest	Jukka Palo	FIN	M02	1.23:26.4	21.6 km/h		
1)	Jani Tilaeus	FIN	M03	1.32:00.9	19.6 km/h		
5)	Simon Bate	GBR	M03	2.25:25.2	12.4 km/h	58.1 %	(5 starters)
1)	Gian Jörger	CH	M06	1.29:44.9	20.1 km/h		
12)	Chris Maund	GBR	M06	1.58:29.5	15.2 km/h	32.0 %	(15 starters)
1)	Harri Ala-Lahti	FIN	M07	1.33:52.4	19.2 km/h		
13)	Peter Drew	GBR	M07	2.04:50.5	14.4 km/h	33.0 %	
14)	Adam Pinney	GBR	M07	2.09:46.5	13.9 km/h	38.2 %	(18 starters)

Ladies F01-F06 30 km

Fastest	Emma Hämäläinen	FIN	F01	1.34:13.4	19.1 km/h		
1)	Sanna Valkeejärvi	FIN	F04	1.42:47.8	17.5 km/h		
5)	Kelley Haniver	GBR	F04	2.08:56.4	14.0 km/h	25.4 %	(7 starters)

Ladies F07-F08 20 km

Fastest	Sirkka Ehrnrooth	FIN	F08	1.08:45.0	17.5 km/h		
1)	Tuula Rasimus	FIN	F07	1.14:28.8	16.1 km/h		
7)	Janet Alexander	NZL	F07	1.33:49.8	12.8 km/h	26.0 %	(9 starters)

Friday, nearing the end now and the warmest day of the trip for the final race, long free technique, at about -6 °C at race start. Because of the earlier cancellations, the OC had allowed everyone to enter this race if they wanted to, and thus it was that several *mad fools* in our team decided that 30 km classic one day would be great followed by 30 km free technique the following day (Jon had already decided that this was not the way to go, and had limited his racing to just the free technique event). Chris, Janet, Peter and Kelley, though, all opted for the “shop (ski) ‘til you drop (dead)” approach, so let’s learn how they got on 😊!

Simon and I were on photographer duty and, despite it being relatively warm, it was still quite cold standing around to watch the whole British/New Zealand contingent start, given that they were quite spaced out (man) in time. But I counted them all off, although didn’t stand around to count them all back in because, as the air temperature climbed to -4 °C at midday, my foot temperature was going in the opposite direction!

Age groups for the long race start in reverse order, with the oldest groups going of first, followed by the younger groups. Peter, M07, was first off for us at 09:35, followed by Kelley, F05 at 09:55, Janet, F07 at 10:05, Chris M06 at 10:20 and finally Jon at 10:30. It was shortly after Jon set off that I decided, for reasons of sanity, to head back indoors to get warm.



A fine action shot of Kelley, not long after the start

I'm not sure that Peter enjoyed this race all that much. Far happier in classic than skate (*Hooray, Ed.*), this was perhaps one race too many for him. There was a photo opportunity, though when (as you can see below), both he and Chris appeared in the same shot, Peter finishing a lap and Chris just getting underway. For Kelley, skating is her preferred technique (*Boo, Ed.*), and she seemed happier with this one when it was all over, her second-best race of the week.



Janet copies Kelley, but leading on the other side

That left just Jon and Janet. I'm not quite sure of the reasons, but Janet DNFd this race; maybe tired, maybe showing what we knew already that skate is not her favourite technique (*Hooray, Ed.*). For Jon, great final result! His best race of this event, not quite his best-ever Masters result but his second best and, dun, dun, daa, the first time he beat a racer! The only way is up from there!

Long distance free technique, Friday 16th February

Mens M01-M08 30 km

	Fastest	Vesa Tiihonen	FIN	M03	1.19:13.9	22.7 km/h		
1)		Jari Kalliokoski	FIN	M04	1.21:33.3	22.1 km/h		
18)		Jon Bowskill	GBR	M04	2.12:09.2	13.6 km/h	62.0 %	(19 starters)
1)		Raivo Pärnpuu	EST	M06	1.24:58.0	21.2 km/h		
23)		Chris Maund	GBR	M06	1.52:31.4	16.0 km/h	32.4 %	(26 starters)
1)		Alexander Usatov	ROM	M07	1.26:33.8	20.8 km/h		
25)		Peter Drew	GBR	M07	2.08:37.7	14.0 km/h	48.6 %	(25 starters)

Ladies F01-F06 30 km

	Fastest	Sini Alusniemi	FIN	F03	1.25:11.3	21.1 km/h		
1)		Jonna Kurunen	FIN	F04	1.34:33.4	19.0 km/h		
10)		Kelley Haniver	GBR	F04	1.54:58.9	15.7 km/h	21.6 %	(12 starters)

Ladies F07-F08 20 km

Fastest	Sirpo Pääkönen	FIN	F08	1.06:05.1	18.2 km/h
1)	Kelly Allison	USA	F07	1.10:24.1	17.0 km/h
	Janet Alexander	NZL	F07	DNF	



Two for the price of one, as Chris, starting, comes level with Peter, lapping

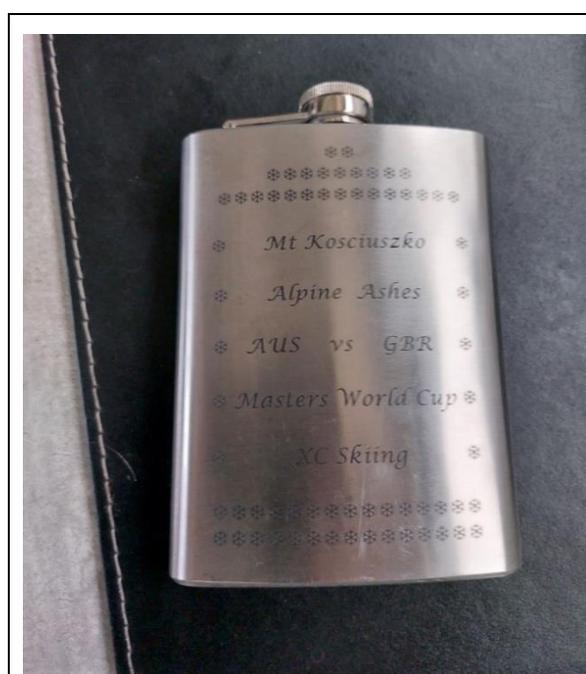


Jon, not only a star of relay finishes, heads down into the first tunnel

Racing over, there was one more item of business that had to be attended to, before we went to the closing banquet. Some members will remember an Australian called Friedl Bartsch, who died of cancer late last year at the age of 66. Friedl was a frequent visitor to Masters events, not only competing in cross-country but in biathlon as well, in which he excelled, with a gold medal in the WWMG 10 km in Quebec in 2015, and silver medal in what was perhaps the 7.5 km event (the results are unclear) at the WWMG in Seefeld in 2020, in which he shot clear. We've had many battles with Friedl over the years, in individual races and in relays, with the relay in Klosters coming specifically to mind.

Friedl instigated the Skiing Ashes, with a silver flask as the trophy in which, it is rumoured, there are some ashes of a ski ceremonially burnt and some ashes of Friedl himself, but he never had the opportunity to present the trophy. This year we had the chance, in collaboration with Zac Zacharias, also of Australia, with the trophy going to whichever of Australia or Great Britain had the best four results, based on % of the winner's time in their category. And guess what – we won (although it was quite close)! Everyone potentially played a part, but the final scores were:

Australia			Great Britain		
Name	Race	%	Name	Race	%
Benjamin Barr	5 km C, M03	25.8	Kelley Haniver	5 km C, F04	18.5
David Simpson	30 km F, M08	34.5	Chris Maund	5 km C, M06	31.7
Zac Zacharias	30 km F, M08	37.0	Peter Drew	30 km C, M07	33.0
Wayne Pethybridge	30 km F, M07	32.4	Adam Pinney	30 km C, M07	38.2
Total		129.7	Total		121.4



What we won – the Skiing Ashes trophy



Dr. Pinney goes ecstatic at finally winning something!

So we've set the trend, and we need to ensure that we have a good turnout in Klosters next year so that we can retain the trophy, which was a nice bit of fun and a friendly drink before we walked the short distance back to the Sports Hall for the closing banquet, where the food was good and we (well, some of us) even had seconds of pudding! It was back home on the train for most of us the following morning.

In summary, I greatly enjoyed this event and you can see a short review of the opening and closing ceremony and Race 1 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDDuR7YIkU8>! It's easy to point to the things that were good if not excellent: fantastic tracks, easy walk from accommodation to start, plentiful snow, communal dining for many people, great waxing facilities, ... and we can hardly blame the Finns for the weather. But there was something, a 'spirit' which is hard to identify but led to this being a highly enjoyable event; the company for sure, the opportunity to chat with new skiers and skiers from previous events, the hassle-free nature of the whole week, the way the Finns handled the difficult racing conditions It led me to categorise these as "The Friendly Games". We had good fun in Klosters when we were last there in 2017; let's hope that they can match Vuokatti in 2025.