

European (Masters) Indoor Championships 2015

Three of Worcester's veteran/masters athletes have recently returned from the European (Masters) Indoor Championships, which this year was held in Torun, central Poland on 23rd-28th March.

With the local airport being closed for "runway repairs" our flight was transferred to Gdansk, so we had a scenic coach tour of over 100 miles to reach the venue. All went well and when we arrived in Torun we could see it was a medieval walled city, recognised as a World Heritage site with beautiful buildings and narrow cobbled streets. However, the building we found most interesting was a mile or so out of town and is probably the very best indoor track facility in Europe! The track, sports halls and various other training/competition facilities including a hotel, make this something that we in the UK can only dream about.



Our small group of Worcester AC members comprised Barry Swindells (M75) Iris Holder (W70) and Mel Garland (W50). Barry started with the 800m, finishing in 6th place in a very competitive final in a Seasons Best (SB) time of 2.58.59. Barry was the leading British athlete in this event. In his second race Barry tackled the 1500m where he was the only British runner to make the final. Starting well, Barry was in the leading group but they gradually pulled away and he dropped back to 5th.

Regaining one place, Barry went into the final lap some 15 metres down on the Spanish runner but with a truly storming final 200m clinched third place on the line and

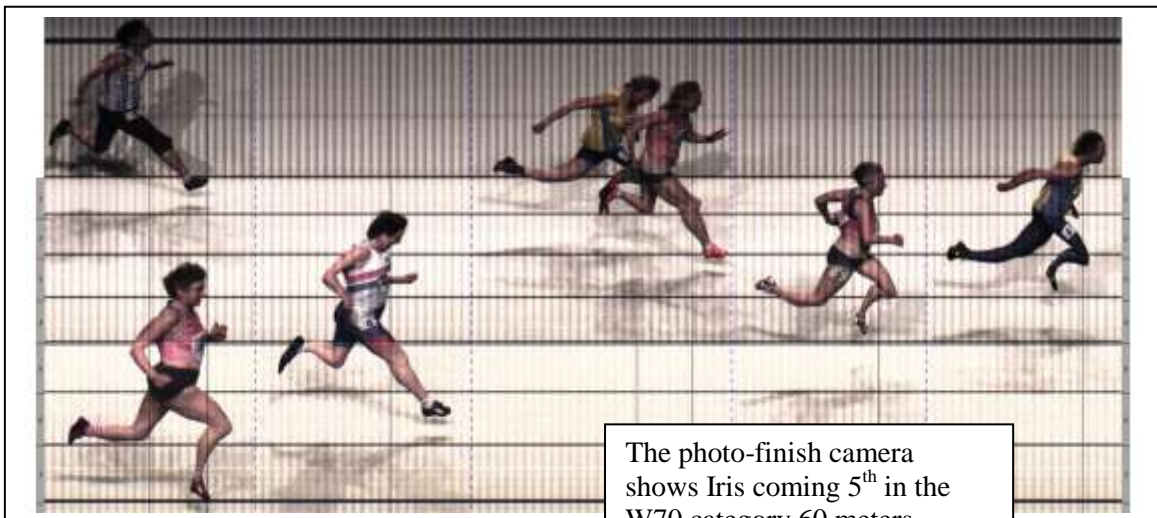


with it, the bronze medal.

Iris opened her competition with the W70 Long Jump where she was the sole GB athlete. With competitors from Germany, Russia and Sweden all clearing 3mt plus, the standard was incredibly high. Even so, they could not match the lady that normally wears the yellow vest of Worcester AC and Iris is now European Champion with a leap of 3.34mt which is the furthest she has achieved for several years.



In the heats of the 60m sprints, Iris ran an SB of 10.71 to make the final, the only British athlete to do so. In the final she finished a creditable 5th in a race dominated by Swedish and German athletes.



The photo-finish camera shows Iris coming 5th in the W70 category 60 meters



In the Triple Jump, Iris went into the competition as joint favourite with Helgard Houben of Sweden.

After the first two rounds of jumps Helgard led by just 1cm (6.67 to 6.66).

Iris managed 6.68 then 6.73 but with her final jump Helgard cleared 6.90 to clinch the gold medal, Iris coming away with the silver (see photo).

The medals measure 3" across, so are quite large and hefty; worthy of the European Championships.



Mel opened her competition with the High Jump, where she was a little disappointed with her 1.25m but bounced back in the Long Jump setting an SB of 4.27m for 6th place in Europe, just ahead of GB team mate, Gaye Clarke.

In the 60mt sprint Mel qualified for the final. This was the first time she had done so wearing an international vest.

In the Triple Jump, Mel put together a good series, the best jump being 8.80m for 4th place. The event was won by her friend and local athlete, Joanne Willoughby of Gloucester AC.

In what was probably the highlight for Mel, she was selected to represent Great Britain in the 4 x 200m relay team. Mel was on leg 2 but by the time the first leg runner handed over the baton Germany were already away and gone and Poland were in second. Mel stormed around the bend, broke from lane at the start of the back straight and handed over in second place with a 10m lead ahead of the Polish runner. This position was maintained and the GB squad came home with Silver.



In the overall medal table Great Britain were placed second behind the powerful German squad, who had entered twice the number of athletes. Poland finished third, followed by Spain, Italy and France. A total of 37 countries took part in the European Masters Indoor Championships. The overall standard was incredibly high (you would expect nothing less) with several European and World records being established.

Congratulations to those Worcester AC members who made the long trip to Poland for this prestigious event and performed so well as part of the GB masters squad.

**Roger Garland
Worcester AC**