



Diamond Jubilee Issue

British Academy of Fencing

ACADEMY NEWS

September 2009
Issue 52

"Run by coaches for coaches"



DIAMOND GEEZERS!

The Diamond Jubilee of the British Academy of Fencing was celebrated in splendid style at Warwick Castle on the 5th and 6th of September. For those lucky enough to have attended the celebrations, it was a superb experience and this was due, to a very great extent, to the efforts of four members of the Academy - our "Diamond Geezers"!

Principal amongst these is our Honoured Former President, Professor David Austin, whose efforts in bringing together a team of professional writers, directors, managers, players and technicians, in order to mount a truly spectacular open air show, involved many hours of work and much else besides. The choice of Warwick Castle, with its splendid Great Hall being used for the Academy's celebratory banquet, was inspirational. In the show's programme, David was quoted as claiming that this was by way of payback from him to the Academy for all that it has meant to him over so many years. If so, his debt has surely been paid with a rate of interest that would make a loan shark's eyes water!

The driving force behind the script for the show was the combination of Professors Roy and Angela Goodall and the dazzling combination of action, drama, comedy, dance and song kept the audience entertained for around two hours, that seemed to fly by.



The TEAM - Roy, Angela, Andrew and David, in a brief break from rehearsals

Although the different segments of the show were distributed amongst several professional fight directors, it took the skills and vision of the fourth member of the team, Andrew Wilkinson, with over twenty years experience in the film industry, to bring it all together into a cohesive whole.

This brief report tends to simplify the individual roles played, but it would be wrong to imagine that each one worked in a narrow field of responsibility. As the credits in the programme indicate, here was a TEAM, each contributing in every field. Truly a bunch of "Diamond Geezers", who can feel justly proud of their achievement.

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<i>15th, please</i>	



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Additional Committee Appointments:**Chairman, SSTT:**

Prof. Leon Hill

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Chairman, Disciplinary Sub-Committee,

Child Protection Officer:

Prof. Mike Joseph

Proficiency Awards Administrator:

(from 1/10/09; see p4)
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BAF/BFA Liaison Officer:

Prof. Peter Northam

Editor, Academy News, Insurance,

Examination Results Coordinator:

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USEFUL INFORMATION**ACADEMY
MERCHANDISE**

**FOR ALL YOUR BAF
MERCHANDISE
GO TO OUR NEW ONLINE
STORE VIA THE LINK
FROM THE BAF WEB SITE**

**RECOMMENDED
RATES OF PAY**

<u>Level</u>	<u>Rate</u>
Diploma	37.75
Maitre d'Escrime and Provost	30.35
Member	25.00
Associate	22.35

Travel - included for first 20 miles,
thereafter 16.1p/mile

**PROFICIENCY
AWARDS**

The current rates for awards are:

BAF Members:

1 - 4 Awards £3.70 each
5 - 9 Awards £3.60 each
10+ Awards £3.40 each

Approved non-Academy Coaches:

1 - 4 Awards **£4.70** each
5 - 9 Awards **£4.10** each
10+ Awards **£3.90** each

A5 Study Guides:

1 - 4 £2.65 (**£2.90**) each (incl. p&p)
5+ £2.30 (**£2.65**) each

A4 Syllabus leaflets:

Free with Study Guide, otherwise 60p
(**70p**) each.

A3 Sized Wallcharts:

65p (**75p**) each
Figures in **RED** are for non-BAF
members

**EXAMINATION
FEES**

Level 1 Assessment £11.00

Level 2 to Diploma £21.00 (**£26.00**)

These are for "normal" exams - for
Special exams, consult the Course
Officer. Figures in **RED** are for
non-BAF members

DOCUMENTATION

The following documentation is available from the Course Officer, Dave Jerry

Key Teaching Points Foil	}£7.35 (£9.45)
Key Teaching Points Epee		
Key Teaching Points Sabre		
Key Coaching Points Foil		
Key Coaching Points Epee		
Key Coaching Points Sabre	}£7.35 (£9.45)
Glossary of Terms.....		
Translation of Fencing Terms in Four Languages.....		
Teaching/ Coaching Tactics (2nd Edition).....		
CD-Rom Issue 4.0 – this contains all the syllabuses and current questions for BAF examinations, as well as other examination material.....		
Examples of past written Papers – for the Advanced and Diploma examinations -		
FREE - apply to Course Officer		
All prices include p & p. Figures in RED are for non-BAF members		

THE PRESIDENT WRITES.....



New Treasurer:

I am pleased to announce that Liam Harrington has offered to become our next Treasurer. Liam will officially take over on the 1st of October. His first task will be to send out our membership reminders. Please note, send your membership subscription to Liam and be warned that from the 1st of October you will NOT be covered by the Academy's insurance until we are in receipt of your membership renewal.

Proficiency Awards & Merchandising Administrator: Jackie Redikin

Sadly, at our committee meeting in June, Jackie announced her resignation from the committee, effective the 30th September. Jackie told the committee that, due to the pressure of other commitments, she could no longer continue in the post. On behalf of the committee and our members, I would like to thank Jackie for the work and commitment she has given to the Academy.

In the short term, that is until the AGM, all enquiries and processing of our Proficiency Awards will be dealt with by Isobel Combes. If you would like to volunteer for the position of Proficiency Awards Administrator, or if you know of anyone who is willing to devote around about 4 hours per week, then please get in touch.

BAF On-Line Shop

As some of you will have noticed, the Academy now has an on-line shop - go to <http://www.baf-fencing.org/merchandising.htm>

Needless to say, there will no longer be a need to maintain merchandising stock. It is hoped that the 'on-line' shop will soon include our documentation - that is, proficiency study guides, key teaching points etc. If there's anything you think the 'on-line' shop should include, then please get in touch. On behalf of the committee, I should like to thank Isobel Combes for creating the shop.

BAF Tracksuit

Unfortunately, the suppliers of our Academy tracksuit (blue Adidas tracksuit) have informed us that Adidas has ceased the manufacture of the tracksuit. In light of the difficulties and cost in finding "one-off" tracksuit suppliers, I am suggesting you use the products available on our "on-line" shop.

Recommended Rates of Pay (Sept '09 to Sept '10)

On Page 3 you will find various pieces of useful information, including recommended rates of pay. These have now been updated. Please be advised that, whilst recommending the above figures, I accept there will be regional variations. It is important that members realise that these figures are only a guide and an effort to standardise rates of pay throughout the Academy.

Should you require any further information regarding rates of pay, please do not hesitate to contact me.

A Plea for help.

One day as the Little Red Hen was scratching in a field, she found a grain of wheat.

"This wheat should be planted," she said. "Who will plant this grain of wheat?"

"I'm very busy," said the Duck.

"I tried that once, and it didn't work," said the Cat.

"It won't grow" said the Dog.

"Then I will," said the Little Red Hen. And she did.

Soon the wheat grew to be tall and yellow.

"The wheat is ripe," said the Little Red Hen. "Who will cut the wheat?"

"I've got too many commitments," said the Duck.

"It's the wrong time to do it," said the Cat.

"Health and safety won't let me" said the Dog.

"Then I will," said the Little Red Hen. And she did.

When the wheat was cut, the Little Red Hen said, "Who will take this wheat to the mill?"

"I'm not keen on carrying stuff," said the Duck.

"That mill is rubbish," said the Cat.

"I wouldn't do it like that," said the Dog.

"Then I will," said the Little Red Hen. And she did.

She took the wheat to the mill and had it ground into flour. Then she said, "Who will make this flour into bread?"

"Nobody does that anymore," said the Duck.

"It won't work," said the Cat.

"I'm very busy this weekend," said the Dog.

"Then I will," said the Little Red Hen. And she did.

She made and baked the bread. Then she said, "Who will eat this bread?"

"Oh! I will," said the Duck.

"And I will," said the Cat.

"And I will," said the Dog.

"Too late" said the Little Red Hen. "I'm resigning." And she did.

The essence of the above suggests that there are lots many people who are willing to comment, criticize, suggest courses of action, but ultimately reap the benefit of the few willing volunteers who give up what little time they have to run the Academy. There are a considerable number of people who think they know better, but there are very few who are willing to give the time and effort demanded of a committee member. Opinions are easy to have and easy to give out - putting time and effort behind those opinions is a different matter altogether.

It's our Academy, it's your Academy and it's my Academy, but the bad news is that its days

may well be numbered, simply due to the lack of people willing to participate in its day to day running. The work of keeping things going is falling more and more upon the shoulders of a few dedicated individuals who soon, like the Little Red Hen, may decide that they too have had enough. In the past two months one of our committee members has resigned due to personal commitments, whilst another has given notice of not being available to continue beyond the AGM due to failing health

Your committee deals with all and every issue concerned with the running of the Academy, from some almost insignificant issues to the more important ones of **Child Protection, Health and Safety** and keeping coaches insured for the work they do. Its officers give of their time freely, often making many personal sacrifices. Whilst they do not actively seek thanks or praise, they do work tirelessly. And, whilst a few are willing to continue to give of their time, there are fewer willing to step into the shoes of those who either wish to retire, or have simply given too much for too long.

It's a bit of a bleak picture but it doesn't end there. I do not wish to sound alarmist, but there is a real possibility that certain aspects of the Academy may cease to exist simply because there's no one willing to do the job. It is not inconceivable that the Academy itself could cease to be viable, in which case what credibility will the qualifications, for which you have worked so hard, have in a few years time? An Advanced award, or even a Diploma doesn't count for much when the awarding body has ceased to exist. If there is no Academy, then the endless support we give to coaches, fighting for their qualifications to be respected, will no longer be there.

So, if you want the Academy to grow in strength and your qualifications to be valued, then I suggest that you ask not what the Academy can do for you but what you can do for the Academy.

Through the hard work of some of its most dedicated volunteers, the Academy has just celebrated the 60th Anniversary of its refunding, with a splendid weekend at Warwick Castle. I very much hope that this inspires members to redouble their efforts to support the Academy and to consider what they can contribute.

At the moment, we need a new Membership Secretary and we need someone willing to take over the running of the Proficiency Award Scheme. Please consider seriously whether you can consider putting yourself forward for these positions. They may not necessarily be your cup of tea, but you will be valued and supported for your contribution. If you cannot commit to a full time position, can you offer some time to take some of the load off the shoulders of a hard pressed committee member?

We are celebrating 60 years. Let us do so by considering how we can continue taking the Academy from strength to strength in the years to come.

Philip Bruce, President

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Vetting and Barring Scheme

All coaches need to be aware of the new Vetting and Barring Scheme, which is to be launched on **Oct 12th 2009**. This latest scheme to safeguard children is to take the form of a continuously monitored database of all those who are in contact with children, either in a voluntary or professional capacity. From October 2009, employers, social services and professional regulators will be obliged to refer to the Independent Safeguarding Authority any information about individuals who may in some way pose a risk to children.

From July 2010, individuals can begin to register with the ISA (through one of the CRB registered organizations). The legal requirement for them to do so will come into force in **November 2010**. At this point, employers will be required to check the status of any employee through this database. Once a person is registered on this scheme they will be continuously monitored for any indication that they might pose a threat to children. This information will come from a number of sources, including police, local authorities and employers. We are assured that the ISA will engage in 'allegation management' to screen out false or malicious allegations. However, the ISA is also 'duty bound to consider all information it receives, regardless of the source'.

An individual deemed to be posing a risk to children will be barred from the database and it will be a criminal offence of an employer knowingly to take on a barred individual in either a paid or voluntary capacity, which involves contact with children, or vulnerable adults. It will also be a criminal offence for a barred individual to seek such employment.

It will be an offence for anyone to begin a regulated activity (as either employee or volunteer) without being registered with the ISA and the employer will be required by law to confirm their ISA registration before taking them on. There will be no requirement for parents to do this check on those who they employ in a private capacity although the option is open to them. It will still be an offence for a barred individual to seek such employment.

Contrary to some of the misinformation being spread around, ISA registration will NOT replace CRB checks. Not only will they continue to be mandatory as now, but from 12th October 2009, all CRB checks on those working with children or vulnerable adults will have to be Enhanced, rather than Standard. There will be a new application form from July 2010 to allow an individual to apply for ISA registration and a CRB check at the same time.

The ISA registration involves a one off application fee (£64 - £58 in Northern Ireland - but free for unpaid volunteers) and will apply to any future setting where the person is working with children or vulnerable adults.

Definitions

Regulated Activity

- * Activities (of a specified nature - including teaching, training, care, supervision etc) involving contact with children or vulnerable adults, once a month or more (defined as frequently), or taking place three or more days in any 30 day period, or 'overnight' (defined as intensively).
- * Activities involving contact with children or vulnerable adults in a specified place (e.g. schools and care homes) in a frequent or intensive basis as above.
- * Fostering and childcare
- * Certain specified positions of responsibility.

ISA registered

- * No information is held that demonstrates that the person poses a risk of harm to children or vulnerable adults
- * The registration status is being continually monitored.
- * The absence of a name on the register does not automatically mean that individual is barred. They may simply not have registered.

Vulnerable Adults

These are defined as persons who have attained the age of 18 and:

- * Are in residential accommodation or sheltered housing or lawful custody
- * Are under supervision as result of a court order
- * Receive domiciliary or any form of health care
- * Receive welfare services of a certain kind or certain kinds of payments
- * Require assistance in the conduct of their own affairs

Children

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 except in employment settings where the age limit is 16.

Further information may be found by writing to

Head of unit: John O'Brien

The Home Office
Vetting and Barring Scheme Programme
1st Floor, Peel Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Tel: 020 7035 4848

Email: public.enquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

HARRINGTON'S HARANGUE

Musings from your Members' Rep.

Let's imagine for a moment that you are a good fencing coach. It stands to reason. After all, you're reading this, so you are in the BAF - obviously you are a good fencing coach. So clearly you are capable of giving a technical, fast, and highly competitive lesson to one of your pupils. Ok, now give the same lesson with your sword in your other hand. Can you do it? Every bit as well as you can with your normal hand? No? Me neither. If you can do it, then I'm highly envious of you. You can probably skip the rest of this and go back to re-read Philip's column (he might be in a better mood this issue!).

I'm naturally right handed, so that is the way I have traditionally given most of my lessons. However I frequently get approached by pupils who want help with fencing left handed fencers. This happens most often at foil, but occasionally with épée and sabre as well. In addition to that, having watched some of my pupils fencing left handed opponents, I've decided they are going to get some left handed lessons whether they ask for them or not.

Realistically your fencers are going to come up against left-handed opponents on a fairly regular basis. As a coach one of your jobs is to help them deal with that situation. This, to my mind, means you need to be able to give lessons using your other hand. On a slight aside I've noticed that left handed coaches appear to be far more willing to learn to coach using their right hand, than right handed coaches are willing to learn to coach using their left hand.

So how do you do it? On a basic level it is fairly easy to stand on guard the other way round and get your pupil to attack you. Which is not a bad exercise - at least it get the pupil used to facing somebody who fences with the sword in the "wrong" hand. However, once you get beyond that, it becomes progressively harder for the coach. Do you want your pupil to parry and riposte? Then you have to be able to deliver a realistic attack with your other hand. Do you want them to be able to take successive parries? Then you have to be able to deliver a realistic compound attack with your other hand. Do you want them to be able to counter riposte? Then you have to be able to deliver a parry riposte (at least) with your other hand. Add in counter time, counter attacks, prises-de-fer, ceding and opposition parries, and so forth, and suddenly the coach has a difficult job on their hands. I've found it takes a fair amount of practice to do even a half decent job of coaching left handed.

Last issue I asked you all to try and identify an area of improvement for your coaching and do something about developing it. Well this is one of the areas I have decided to try and improve on. So I've been along to a coach education session to practice giving left handed lessons. I've also taken a few lessons left handed as well. If you've never tried that, you should. It does tend to start to hurt after ten minutes or so, though. I think it's down to using all those muscles that have never been used before.

I know I have a fair way to go before lessons given with my left hand as good as ones given with my right. Nevertheless I have had a few of my pupils say to me that they often do not notice I'm using my left hand until they are half way through the lesson. I sort of take that as a compliment, since it indicates there is not too much deterioration in my own performance when I'm using my other hand. It does not say much for the pupil's powers of observation, but that does give me something to work on for the next lesson.

Liam Harrington, Members' Representative

Membership Subscription Reminder

1st October 2009 to 30th September 2010

It's that time of year again when your membership is due for renewal. The subscriptions applying to the above season are as follows:

Insured coach - Master/Maître d'Escrime/Provost/ Member/Associate of the Academy
£63

Retired Member (Not actively coaching and not covered by BAF insurance)
£20

Overseas Member (residing outside the UK & not covered by BAF insurance)
£32

Please return a cheque made payable to "The British Academy of Fencing" to
Prof. L Harrington, 76 Varney Road, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP1 2LR

You should note that, whilst your membership subscription remains unpaid, you are **NOT** covered by the Academy's insurance.

Contact Liam for details of Bank transfer facilities.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

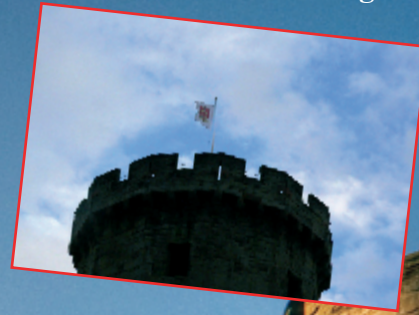
If you were at the Banquet and were fascinated to hear about Bob Anderson's career in films and TV, you can find out more at:

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0026428/>

NEED A SOUVENIR?

David Austin will have DVDs, T-shirts, posters and programmes of the Diamond Swords event available for purchase.

Contact David on
austinbaf@hotmail.com for more details.

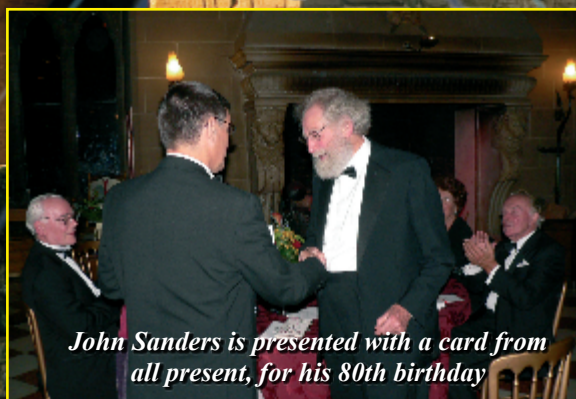


Bob Anderson shows the assembled company his BAF Diploma - the first ever awarded!



British Academy of Fencing
1949 - 2009

Diamond Jubilee
Celebrations



John Sanders is presented with a card from all present, for his 80th birthday



The Academy's "Mount Rushmore"! Four Presidents, past and present - David Austin, Leon Hill, Bob Anderson and Philip Bruce



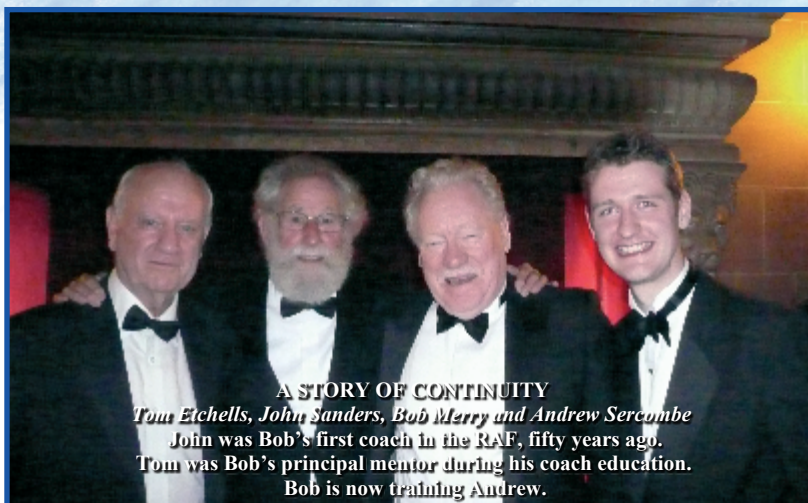
Some present and former Vice-Presidents join the party - Mike Joseph, Tom Etchells, Peter Stewart and Roy Goodall

If you weren't at Warwick Castle for the Diamond Swords Jubilee, then I think everyone who was there will agree with me that you missed the event of the decade. The Academy celebrated its Jubilee in great style, in a magnificent setting, over a most memorable couple of days. During the day, our "come and try" sessions were an overwhelming success, with well over 100 participants on the first day alone. This was thanks to our hard working team of coaches led and organised by Dave Jerry, assisted by wives and, in some cases, their children.

The banquet took place in the breathtaking setting of the Great Hall and was attended by a wide range of members, including one whose membership goes back to the earliest years of the Academy. The evening as a whole will be remembered for the renewal of old acquaintances and the attendance of our guest of honour, Bob Anderson. In recognition of Bob's tremendous contribution to fencing both on and off the screen, Bob was presented with a statuette and the very first print of the newly designed diploma, slightly altered for the circumstances.

The culmination of the weekend was a show chronicling the history of the fencing master from 1540 to the present day. The weekend could not have happened without the almost endless number of volunteers who gave of their time freely and unconditionally.. On behalf of the Academy, I would like to thank and congratulate everyone involved. As you will be aware, the mastermind behind the weekend was David Austin and the Academy owes David a debt of gratitude that will never be adequately repaid.

Philip Bruce, President



A STORY OF CONTINUITY
Tom Etchells, John Sanders, Bob Merry and Andrew Sercombe
 John was Bob's first coach in the RAF, fifty years ago.
 Tom was Bob's principal mentor during his coach education.
 Bob is now training Andrew.



A popular event....



Swordplay beneath the battlements



...at a popular price!



"Hit him there...."



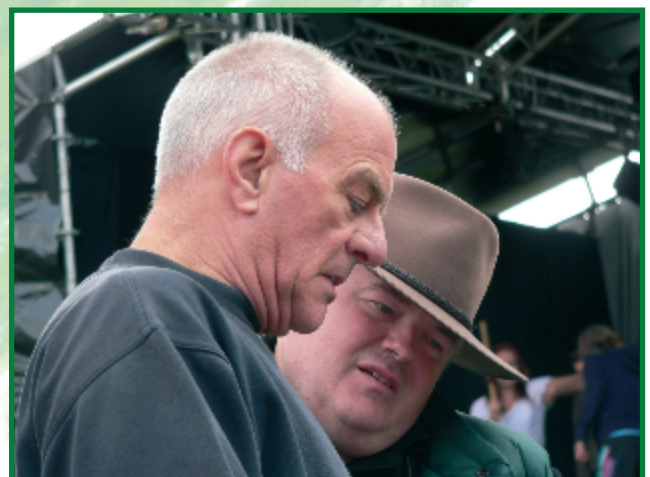
T-shirts and programmes here



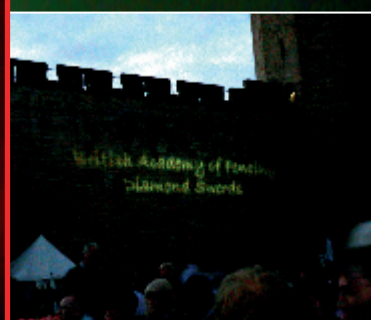
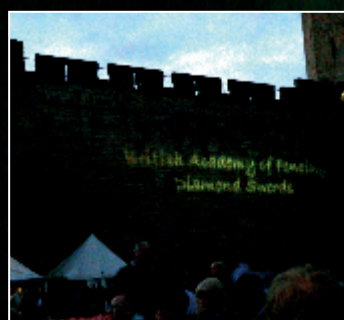
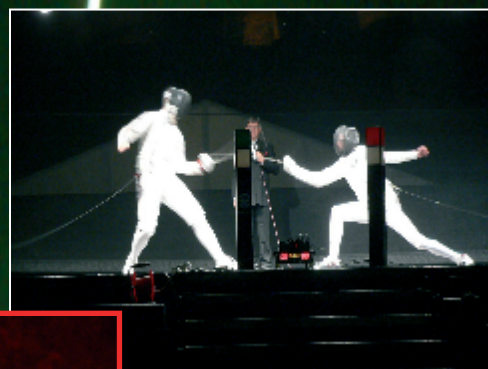
Some locals come to rehearsals



A knotty problem for Andy!



David Morley (King Henry VIII) checks with the Director



The photos on these pages were taken by Janet Faram (bottom, p8), Richard Burn (top left, p9) and Bob Merry. The Diamond Swords background on page 7 was kindly supplied by Dave Jackson Of Abbotts Print & Design

Letters Special

In the previous issue of Academy News, Philip Bruce's column "The President Writes....." created quite a reaction and we are devoting a Letters Special in this issue to air some of the points raised.

From Adam Blight

A coaching colleague of mine has drawn my attention to the article by Philip Bruce in Issue 51 of Academy News, concerning Examinations and Standards, and has speculated that perhaps it refers to myself. However, it seems to me that this cannot be the case, since the views and comments described in the article are in no way those of my own. I would deplore especially the derogatory terms with which exam board members have apparently been described and, if an Academy member has spoken in such terms, surely they might expect some form of disciplinary action. For my own part, I have felt genuinely grateful and privileged to have had such expert and knowledgeable coaches on the boards of the exams I have taken and on a number of occasions have experienced the help and guidance they can give, especially since at every exam I have taken I have suffered the most debilitating nerves and struggled tremendously to give the lessons. I had hoped that at the Easter course, in addition to improving my coaching skills, I might also be able to shed these nerves and perform better. Unfortunately, this did not occur and the lesson I gave at the exam was indeed very poor. This was all the more disappointing since I could not have drawn a better set of questions. As such, it would have been an act of unwarranted charity to have passed me on that occasion. I was grateful for Prof. Leon Hill's attempt to draw from me the lesson I was attempting to give and, at the close of the course, I took the opportunity to thank Leon for his patience.

I would be grateful if you are able to assure me that this article does not refer to myself. Or indeed, if it does, could you please accept my absolute assurance that I have at no time whatsoever made the derogatory comments referred to and that I am indeed a supporter of the British Academy system of coach education and examination. If there are any who might suppose that your article might refer to myself, especially members of exam boards, I would be happy to have this letter published, as I would not like it thought that I could be so ungracious.

Yours sincerely

Adam Blight

From Alan Ley

Having received the latest Academy News, I read the article by Philip Bruce with great interest. I have always enjoyed (endured?!!) examinations and have gained my results and qualifications along the way. I too can believe in "modern fencing", but, since I've not been out there on the world circuit for some time, does that make me a fossil or a dinosaur? Does this description apply to the BAF itself? I don't think so.

The way I personally see it is that it is a bit like your driving test - do it the way you've been taught and you will succeed in the examination. After that? Well, we all have our driving habits and fads. The Academy courses have always been (and, to me, will always be) the foundation for coaches from all over the world. Also, if one needs a certificate to prove it, it comes with success with the Academy. I have mentioned this to colleagues who are seriously thinking of attending your courses, to further their careers. Whether they show up or not is their choice. I hope to attend the Autumn Course.

Thank you again to all the coach educators who help us all.

Best wishes

Alan Ley.

From Raph Aldis

On receiving the July edition of Academy News, I was somewhat surprised that Philip Bruce chose to write an entire page defending the BAF against an individual who *he had heard* on the grapevine challenge the Academy examinations and insulted members. Philip claimed to be *always cautious about hearsay statements* – why then should he choose to publish such hearsay statements to ALL Academy members? Is this really the only news that the President of the British Academy of Fencing had to offer in this edition?

I was also disturbed to read that he regarded the alleged comments as clear evidence of a common failure to understand the requirements of BAF examinations. Is there a common failure to understand the requirements of BAF examinations? If so, then surely the Academy should be doing everything they possibly can to minimise this failure to understand. Particularly for we lower level coaches hoping to gain higher qualifications. This is quite a serious flaw that should not be defended but repaired and/or improved upon?

Philip's conclusion dictates – "...our examination system is not only demanding but also a test of a coach's personal strength of character. Those who do not have the courage to have their abilities judged in an objective light and to learn from the experience, will very rightly fail to succeed." How inappropriate, aggressive, unprofessional and rude is this statement? Whereas I appreciate that I have not attended as many BAF training courses and workshops as other members and am still quite a low level coach, having read Philip's statement, I'd be almost afraid to attend and/or criticise a BAF course. If a simple, unconfirmed criticism of the BAF can spark over 800 aggressive and dictatorial words, what on earth would confirmed criticism generate? Do we dare criticise fearing the response we would receive?

Perhaps an article detailing how Philip had sought out said individual, confirmed said comments and worked to defuse or resolve said individual's issues and concerns would have been more appropriate and worthwhile reading. As President of the Academy is it not in Philip's and the Academy interests to investigate and resolve such claims? After all, there is the possibility that such beliefs may be much more widely spread than the Academy realise, and could dissuade us away from future courses. Then again, perhaps such beliefs may only be a "storm in a teacup" – who's to know?

Regards

Raph Aldis

Continued on Page 12.....

Letters Special (continued from page 11)

(Editor's Note: The letters on the previous page were originally an exchange of emails, which the contributors have agreed to be made available to the membership generally via Academy News. One point that should be made to the membership is that there is **always** a channel through which to express yourself and your concerns can be dealt with in a non-confrontational manner).

From Prof. Bert Bracewell

I must congratulate the present SSTT on its structure of exams, with excellent documentation, coaching points etc. There is only aspect I feel could be improved upon, based on my experience as Scottish National Coach. It was found that not enough coaches, either through time or inclination, were training at épée and sabre. At the time the Scottish Amateur Fencing Union decided that only one class was needed at each level and this resulted in more coaches studying multiple weapons, as they only had to pass an individual lesson and theory at the other two weapons. This is my personal opinion, not a criticism of the Academy, whom I have supported for 50 years. How do other Coaches feel about this?

There can never be an examination which is 100% satisfactory to all participants, but *the* current BAF exam is the best yet. I tell all Scottish Fencing Coaches, that take an Advanced exam, to do exactly what the examiners require, pass the exam and then learn to coach. Experience with the weapon in hand will naturally improve the coach. During my time running and examining coaches I did a survey of those who had passed the Advanced exams about how long it was before they produced a national youth finalist. On average, it was 5 years.

Bert Bracewell

Philip Bruce replies:

It seems my article seems to have stirred up a storm of opinions, which is a good thing, as these were issues that needed discussing! First of all, there have been a number of those who have expressed support both verbally and in writing and I am gratified and touched by their positive words.

I had no intention of pointing the finger at anyone. Adam has clearly re-examined some comments of his own in the light of what I said and has had the courage to put his head over the parapet to apologise for possible misunderstandings and to reiterate his support for his teachers and examiners. Such strength of character is to be commended. I applaud his actions, and I'm sure that that he will continue to work hard and achieve the success he deserves.

Raph thinks I should have "sought out" the source of the offending remarks and dealt personally with them. I have no intention of ever acting on rumour to confront and intimidate any member of the Academy in that way. Neither would I have 'named and shamed' any individual on the basis of hearsay evidence. However, it is by no means the first time that offensive and derogatory comments about course tutors and examiners have come to my attention and it is time that members were made aware of just how damaging such talk can be. We are all guilty of a few sour grapes from time to time, but it is easy to forget just how quickly such careless comments get around, damaging everyone's reputation in the process.

I would ask anyone who has stood in front of a board of examiners to remember that these people, who are trying to **help** you to achieve your goals, do so out of their deep personal commitment to the Academy. Our senior examiners have given a lifetime of dedication to this cause and many would be entitled to say that they had already done more than enough. They examine for little more than expenses and a meal, and they deserve to do so without becoming the butt of criticism and innuendo. If any candidate has a genuine grievance against an examiner, there are proper channels for pursuing this and I would urge them to do so. I make no apology for defending to the hilt, and with a certain amount of personal passion, the right of the Academy's senior masters to receive respect and consideration from those who are making use of their (entirely voluntary) services.

I'm afraid Raph is being rather disingenuous when he says that he would be afraid to attend or criticise a BAF course. He seems to forget that is the second time he has seen fit to criticise me personally and in quite strong terms. In the first case this took the form of a letter detailing what he saw as the failings of the Academy and he was given the courtesy of an immediate reply, in which I sought to alleviate some of his concerns and invited him to further BAF courses. Now he seeks to criticise directly my judgement and actions as President. I would suggest that a little more experience of the system than one day course and one residential course might be appropriate prior to giving advice on what opinions a president is permitted to express. I wonder how he might feel if one of his own beginner fencers saw fit to advise him on how to conduct himself as a coach! If he is genuinely interested in how we are responding to concerns regarding our system, I would invite him to attend our Annual General Meeting at which he might become more familiar with the way our system is under continuous review in light of the feedback we receive.

Over the years our residential courses have grown steadily, both in numbers and in worldwide respect. It is now the biggest English speaking coaching course in the world and it is now routine for us to have international students attending. I have no fears about foolish and derogatory remarks dissuading potential attendees - our results speak for themselves. However, as I said in my column this month, there is a real danger of those who give so much to the Academy becoming discouraged and disillusioned. It is in the nature of these people to endure this in silence and those concerned did ask me not to publish my earlier article. However, I have had enough of seeing those whom I respect and to whom I owe so much being the subject of constant criticism and fault finding. Someone has to speak up for them, and on this occasion I chose to do so. They have given a great deal and deserve better.

The very fact that these letters have been published publicly underlines what I have always said. If you want to criticise, do so and put your name to it. We have no hesitation in discussing these things openly and transparently and anyone who wishes to contact me directly can do so. Concerns can **always** be discussed without any fear of future prejudice in exams or whatever. I do maintain that the right to criticise goes hand in hand with the obligation to participate and to acquire knowledge of what you are talking about. If you are interested enough to tell us how to do it, then you should be interested enough to participate, at the very least by attending the AGM and hopefully much more by participating in some of the work of running the Academy.

Finally as one very senior master once told me, if you want change the system, get qualified and then make representation.

Philip Bruce

LOOKING BACK AT TRAINING FOR A DIPLOMA

*by Prof H T Bracewell
Scottish National Coach for Scotland.*

Having just read the latest Academy News and the comments made, I thought of how I trained for and took my Diploma, forty-three years ago.

On being accepted by the Academy, one had to wait 18 months before one could attempt the Provost examinations. These were conducted on one day at all weapons. When I took my Provost exam there were thirteen candidates and just two were successful. However, candidates only gave one class lesson.

Having gained your Provost, you then waited three years before attempting the Diploma. Included in this exam were First Aid, Anatomy and Physiology, Presiding and being able to take an advanced lesson at each weapon. There was neither a syllabus nor any set questions. The board of three could ask for any lesson they liked and then could ask to see a different aspect e.g. tactical, technical, speed, or rhythm of the lesson. Marks were numerical with a pass mark of 60% and one could fail by 1 mark at one weapon even if you had scored well at the other two weapons. Some of the failures at the time were bizarre to say the least.

How did I train for my Diploma? My coach was Professor A Simmonds, to whom I owe so much. He prepared me for the examinations, but with the wide range of actions needed it was virtually impossible for one person to cover all aspects. Prof Gomar Williams was in the same boat, so before the exam we worked together for 3 years. We would hire a gym on a Saturday and would often pay a Full Master for 2 hours work at £3.30 an hour. This was a sizeable sum then, considering that £14.00 a week was an excellent salary. I was told by the oil company for whom I worked that, when I reached £1000 per year, I had made it. That was in the swinging 60's. After we had spent time with a master, we would then work for another 3 hours to build up our coaching ability.

I always recommend to coaches that they take as many lessons from top masters as they can. Don't just criticize, but think about the content of the lesson received. Each master had their own coaching quirks and this is how we built up the knowledge required for our future as coaches. Once, in Paris, I took a sabre lesson stripped to the waist and no mask. The coach concerned had trained a World Champion. It was amazing how one kept concentrating and one's elbow tucked in, because if the elbow was exposed the coach hit it!!!! Words of correction were not necessary. (However I do not recommend this style of coaching).

I still believe that only by gaining this wide experience will someone be an excellent and open minded coach.



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COURSES

BAF RESIDENTIAL COURSES 2009

Autumn Course: 26th - 31st October 2009

Fees for the Course (provisional)

Residential: £355 (BAF Member) £410 (Non-member) £355 (Pupil)

Non-residential: £295 (BAF Member) £320 (Non-member) £295 (Pupil)

Course to be held at Denstone College, Staffordshire.

Places on this course are already being booked, so don't delay!

Contact Dave Jerry, the Course Officer, to ensure your place.

Contact details are on page 3

Various Coach Education courses are held on a regular basis. The following contacts may be useful. Otherwise, contact Dave Jerry, the Course Officer, for the latest information.

Yorkshire Coaches' Club: monthly 10 am to 4 pm at Ackworth School, Pontefract. Levels 1 – 4 catered for; Level 5 by arrangement. Coach Educators of the Academy will cover the Theory and Practice of Coaching. All coaches and their pupils are welcome to attend. Please contact Provost Dave Jerry (see page 3).

Sunday Coaches' Club, Birmingham: normally the first Sunday in each month, from 10 pm to 4 pm at St. John's Primary School, Mortimer Road, Kenilworth, Warks. CV8 1FS. Coach educators are Prof. Peter Northam and Prof. Pete Cormack. For full details, contact Pete Cormack at cormack@ntlworld.com or on 01926 859881.

Saturday Coaches' Club, Norwich: Monthly at the University Sports Park, Norwich. Advanced Coach Andrew Sowerby invites all coaches in the Norfolk and Suffolk area wishing to prepare for Foil, Epee and Sabre (levels 1 to 4) to come along. E-mail Andrew via www.sowerbyfencing.com

Hemel Hempstead: Due to problems with the venue, the courses run by Prof. Chris Norder are suspended for the time being. If you are interested in coach education in this area, please contact Prof. Liam Harrington for the latest situation.

If you are organising a Coach Education course, please contact the Editor if you wish to have it publicised. You should also inform the Course Officer.

See also the Academy web site for the latest news on courses. Contact the webmaster, Isobel Combes, if you wish to publicise any events there.

www.baf-fencing.org

IMPORTANT

All Course organisers and potential attendees should be aware of the following condition, which applies to all BAF Courses, including "non-official" courses run by Academy members.

Please note the Course Officer and the Course Director reserve the right to refuse an application to attend the course.

— Duellist

www.duellist.com