

British Academy of Fencing **ACADEMY NEWS**



September 2010
Issue 57

"Run by coaches for coaches"

FENCING MASTERS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

*A report by Professor Peter Cormack,
Team Manager and Captain, FMWC 2010*

Back story

Four years ago I returned from Belgium having competed in the Fencing Masters World Championships. I was full of enthusiasm as Jodoigne 2006 had provided me with one of the best experiences of my fencing career. I vowed to return to the event in 2010.

Last year I was asked to go to Switzerland as the team captain. Sadly it soon became apparent that Prof. Mike Joseph would not be able to fulfil the role of team manager due to his illness and I eventually took on this task as well.

Being team manager was a new venture for me and had I known at the time what would be involved I might well have shied from the responsibility. It soon became obvious that the main challenge for me was a Swiss organizer who simply refused to communicate to the point that event was almost cancelled by the AAI at the last moment.

Saturday - Arrival

Louisa Miller, Mick Johnson, Dennis Hunt and I successfully met up at Zurich Airport and took a minute perfect Swiss train to Flawil. During the journey (50 minutes precisely) the 'banter' began with Dennis sharing his seemingly endless anecdotal repertoire, Louisa's 'perky' comments and Mick's knowledgeable insights into the Swiss way of life ... for the most part I just listened and thought rather apprehensively about what we might find in Flawil.

What, or rather who, we found first in Flawil was Liam Harrington who had driven across Europe in his Jaguar to meet us at the hotel thus bringing the team strength up to five. Liam's Jag was actually vitally important to our campaign in Flawil as he graciously agreed to ferry fencing bags and people to and from the venue ... can't think why he objected to it being referred to as "the team minibus" or being asked if he had a roof rack for it!

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"The Magnificent Seven" ready to do battle!

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NEXT ISSUE: November

**Contributions by October
10th, please**



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USEFUL INFORMATION

**ACADEMY
MERCHANDISE**

**FOR ALL YOUR BAF
MERCHANDISE
GO TO OUR 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		
Glossary of Terms.....		£7.35 (£9.45)
Translation of Fencing Terms in Four Languages.....		£7.35 (£9.45)
Teaching/ Coaching Tactics (2nd Edition).....		£16.80 (£21)
CD-Rom Issue 5 – this contains all the syllabuses and current questions for BAF examinations, as well as other examination material.....		£10.00
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.....



AAI Fencing Masters World Championships

Peter Cormack captained our team of Dennis Hunt, Mike Johnson, Isobel Combes, Liam Harrington and Louisa Miller. I would particularly like to extend my congratulations to

Isobel – Silver medallist – Women's Veteran Epée

Liam – Bronze medallist – Men's Master-at-Arms

Louisa – Bronze medallist – Women's Master-at-Arms

AAI Congress

Liam and I represented our Academy at the Congress. The congress was opened with a minute's silence in honour of those fencing masters who have died during the last

four years. Delegates of the more than a dozen National Academies met in congress at Mattenhof. In summary the congress:

Made changes to the statutes

Discussed payment of membership fees and decided to reissue membership cards

Accepted the new Italian academy, Accademia della Scherma as members of the AAI

Elected a new Executive Committee of

President

Mike Bunke (GER)

Vice-Presidents

Antony Gillham (Treasurer, USA)
Cédric Deloison (Secretary General, SWE)

Fionbarr Farrell (IRL)
Giovanni Rapisardi (ITA)

Auditors

Christiane Laszlo (AUT)
Gérald Williot (BEL)

Chose Portugal in preference to Russia to host the 2012 Stage Fencing World Championships

Accepted offers from both the Accademie della Scherma and the BAF to host the 2014 Fencing Master's World Championships. Both Academies will check the viability and make firm proposals before the 2012 congress.

Académie d'Armes Internationale (AAI) Certification

From October this year, the BAF will be able to offer internationally recognised certificates from the AAI - Animateur, Moniteur, Prévôt to those who are successful at levels 2, 3 and 4 respectively.

Examination Questions, Processes and Procedures

I would like to remind all that a new disk has been produced (Issue 5.1 – April '10).

Essentially the changes are mainly concerned with formatting and consistency. There have been minor changes made some of the questions but only to remove ambiguity and improve consistency. If you need a new disk, then please contact Dave

Jerry

Philip Bruce

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS

The under mentioned names are published as having applied for membership of the British Academy of Fencing. If anyone wishes to raise objections or has information which he or she feels is relevant, please contact the Secretary of the BAF.

Jade Cerff Ratby, Leicestershire
Lee Garner Anstey, Leicestershire
Royston Brooks-Lewis Leicester
Neil Farr Ratby, Leicestershire
John Willows Leicester

All objections will be required to be made in writing and will be treated in the strictest confidence.

See the Academy web site at www.baf-fencing.org for details of the latest applications.

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

The next AGM will be on the 8th January 2011. Venue TBC

I SAY, I SAY, I SAY.....

A mugger held up a man in a dark alley with the immortal phrase, "...your money or your life!"

"Alas" the man replied, "You're out of luck, mate. I'm a full-time fencing coach, so I don't have any money and I certainly don't have a life!"



COMMENT

THE EDITOR'S LAMENT

I write this as I'm putting the finishing touches to this edition of Academy News. Up until about 48 hours ago, I was staring at vast expanses of white page, wondering about how I would fill it.

After a few contacts, eventually there are enough articles which I think will be of interest, so I'm almost ready to set off for the printers.

The report from Peter Cormack on the Fencing Masters World Championships rightly fills a number of pages. The team obviously had a rewarding time in Switzerland, both in terms of medals and also with respect to their own experiences. Perhaps this will encourage other coaches to think ahead four years to the next FMWC and set their sights on a place on the team. First, make sure you have a Diploma in at least one weapon and then get training.

Another World Championship possibility is highlighted in Andy Wilkinson's article, introducing his new role on the Committee.

In Chris Eastham's regular column he makes some excellent suggestions for "multi-tasking". He also asks for examples of the advice that coaches give their pupils, so I will set the ball rolling by giving you the one word I always say to my pupils at the start of their competitive career. That first competition can be daunting and all sorts of thoughts are whirling around in their brain. My advice is always - KISS! Keep It Simple, Stupid. Why use complex moves, when a well-timed simple attack gets the job done, for example.

Isobel Combes raises some interesting points in her article on this page. They may seem entirely reasonable to you, or you may violently disagree. Why not let us know with your own contribution to the Letters column, which has been a bit dormant lately, simply due to lack of letters!

Please help this Editor by considering making a contribution to Academy News - the next deadline is October 10th. Thank you.

Bob Merry, Editor

Some Thoughts on Qualifications

By Dr Isobel Combes

In my day it was so simple -- you took O Levels and then a few A levels if you were a glutton for punishment, and that was about it.

This week, my sons have been getting their results -- my younger son has his AS level results and is waiting on his GCSE and IGCSE results. My older one has had the results from his Pre - U exams (Physics and Chemistry), STEP Exams (Mathematics) and A levels. My head is spinning and explaining it to their grandparents is hopeless. Of course they could have gone down a different route and taken the International Baccalaureate which has a whole different set of requirements!

When the eldest chose which university to go to, there was enormous soul searching about which degree course would suit him best -- a degree from one university can differ vastly from one in the same subject from another, not just in quality but also in the content of the curriculum and the structure of delivery. It is up to future employers to decide whether the resulting graduate is one they want to hire.

And people get worried because we have two awarding bodies in this country for fencing coach qualifications? As someone who came to coaching from an academic background, I am astonished at the hand-wringing and empire building that goes on in this country in the desire of some to have a monolithic system with a single curriculum and a single set of standards.

It seems perverse that, in a world where choice is expanding, there are those who want to see coach education take such a regressive step. It is too easy to be told this must happen and to sleepwalk into a state where we are left with no choice. It is easy to take up sides and for BFA supporters to denigrate the BAF coach education and vice versa, but this ultimately damages both parties. Supporting a variety of approaches to coach education makes our sport more modern and more open to development. It is surely worth putting up with the occasional blind alley in this constant search for a better way of doing things.

Sometimes people will get it wrong, and sometimes the candidate will find they are disappointed with their qualification. Well, that's life. My boy is happy with his Pre U results and hopes that future employers will consider them better than A levels. However, if that turns out not to be the case, he cannot trot along to the A level exam board and demand that his qualifications be swapped for some A level ones. He is an adult (well almost) and has to live with the choices he made along the way. It seems cruel to say so, but some coaches need to grow up and do the same. Different education systems can respect each other's qualifications, but they do not need to justify them to each other or to be willing to swap their bits of paper. There is no reason why the various systems, BAF, BFA, Hungarian Diploma, whatever, should not treat each other with public respect and courtesy, whatever our private opinions. It is up to the individual to choose the system and live with the results, results which only mean anything when you stand in front of pupils with the sword in your hand, or beside a piste watching them win or lose.

And for my fellow parents in the coaching community who have survived the dreaded results day -- congratulations to all your offspring and may they have all the success they have worked for!

FMWC...from front page

Louisa and I attended a captains' meeting in the afternoon that, while uneventful, did serve to introduce us to the Swiss organizer' who promptly did his level best to reinforce the impression he had already given of being incompetent.

**Sunday – Veteran & Senior Sabre**

Before I go any further I should say a little about Dennis for the benefit of those who haven't met him. A dose of Dennis and his humorous, well timed repartee can catch you off guard and is great for team morale ... if Dennis was a building he'd be 'listed' like some sort of national treasure! Oh, and if you do meet Dennis ask him to tell you the one about 'the Polish Battle of Britain ace and Cheltenham Ladies College' ... I wager you'll laugh so much it'll hurt!



Most of those in the Men's Veteran Sabre were barely 50 while Dennis passed his half century some time back and, it's fair to say, found their speed difficult to cope with. None the less Dennis produced some good 'classical' sabre to come home in 5th place.

The opening ceremony followed after the Veteran Sabre. Under a very hot midday sun, we paraded in our tracksuits past locals, with me carrying the flag. One of the locals shouted "God save the Queen!" ... for some reason the German accent seemed appropriate and 'we and one's team' responded with the appropriate hand gestures. The rest of the ceremony was a colourful mixture of flags and tracksuits that contrasted with

rather drab speeches by 'mein host', AAI President Mike Bunke and local dignitaries.

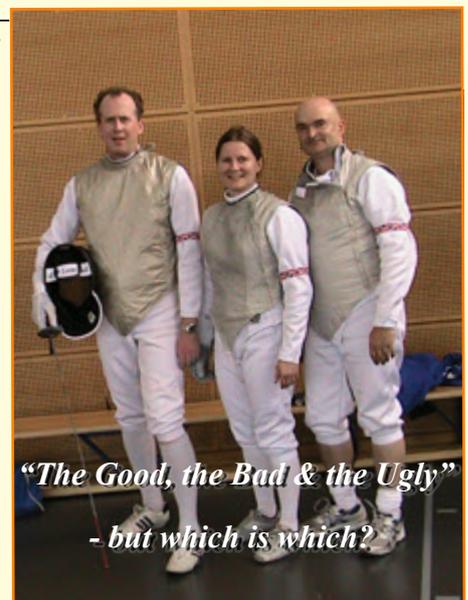
Dennis, Louisa and Liam were all competing in the Senior Sabre events in the afternoon. Both Louisa and Liam were entered in the 'Master at Arms' event and therefore had to fence all three weapons. Liam started a little tentatively finally starting to get into the swing of things in his last few fights and finishing in 14th place. Dennis continued charming his opponents into a false sense of security, eventually coming 17th.

Louisa on the other hand started to show her experience as a competitor right from the word "play" only failing to subdue the Italians. This left her just outside the medals in 4th place following Melandri 3rd, Pivotti 2nd and Cataleta 1st respectively. Was this result a good omen for the rest of the week?

We rounded off our day with a meal at a friendly Italian restaurant, a deluge of a storm and a series of very loud firework displays celebrating Swiss National Day that went on into the early hours.

Monday – Veteran and Senior Florett

Still slightly dazed from the nighttime bombardment (I always thought Switzerland was neutral ... I have my doubts now) Louisa, Liam and I 'tooled up' and prepared to do battle in the senior foil competitions. Of course the French and Italians were warming up as well and in recent years they have dominated these championships.



Both the French and Italians displayed good timing although on this occasion it was the French who showed the better control of distance. The Italians relied on fast attacks and renewals combined with the use of covering actions intended to block out the opponent's attempts to hit. In contrast the French extended phrases with counter ripostes (up to 4th counter riposte on occasion) and were for my money the most stylish fencers at the championships. The morale of the story here for coaching exam candidates is to acquire the skills to give 'competitive' counter riposting exercises if you want your pupils to beat the French!

Becoming a bona fide fencing master is a significant achievement for anyone but Louisa is only the second woman in this country to become a 3 weapon master. Working through the BAF scheme and coaching together at Kenilworth Sword I've got to know Lou well and I know how much it meant to compete in Flawil. In a tough competition Louisa came 7th and that put her in contention

for a podium finish in the Master at Arms category with only the Women's Senior Epée left to go.

Liam's confidence had improved gradually over the course of the sabre and foil competitions and he was producing some consistent results particularly with his parrying and riposting. The men's competition was at times vociferously contested with not a little animosity directed towards referees ... Liam did well to come 12th and put himself in with a chance of a Master at Arms medal. I finished in excruciating pain and in 16th place ... frustrating but at least I was there and had given it a go.

Isobel Combes and Phil Bruce arrived on Monday afternoon to boost our numbers to a magnificent seven and when the fencing finished we retired to a local restaurant to regroup.

Tuesday – Veteran and Women's Senior Degen

Isobel and Mick, in their first FMWCs, were our competitors in the Veteran Epée events. They both made a rather nervous start, due undoubtedly to the sense of occasion, but both began to get into their stride and came a very creditable 2nd and 5th respectively.

After lunch Isobel was joined by Louisa and the German épéist Regina Faust for the Women's Senior Epée. Events are fenced as a pool unique where you first fight your fellow team mates and then the teams from others countries. Following Louisa's results in the Senior Sabre and Foil competitions we all realised that if she fenced well there was a possibility of a medal in the Senior Master of Arms category.



"Double Trouble"

Louisa dispatched Isobel, lost to Regina and then proceeded to fight tenaciously against all the other teams finishing the competition in 7th place with Isobel in 9th position. Overall Louisa claiming the bronze medal for Master at Arms just missing out by the narrowest of margins to Regina Faust who claimed the Silver with Serena Pivotti (ITA) adding another gold medal to her tally. This was a cracking result for Lou in her debut at the FMWC.

Wednesday – AAI Congress/ Day Off

While Phil and Liam enthusiastically set off to go to the AAI Congress other delegates had the option to go on a tour organized by 'mein host'. By this time we had all come to realise the potential for farce in any situation overseen by the



"A Prize of Arms"

Isobel with the "spoils of war"

event organizer so we opted to do our own thing.

Following breakfast we decided to go for a short walk to see a small lake marked on the Flawil map. Circumnavigating allotments, Mick led us in the direction of the watery feature only to discover that it was in fact a large culvert for a tributary and not really the most interesting of tourist attractions ... you'd have had a job selling tickets, let's

put it that way.

A 15 minute journey (15 minutes precisely) by local train saw us arriving in St. Gallen. The town could not have been more different from Flawil ... for a kick off the shops were open! Actually, St. Gallen is one of Switzerland's recognised tourist attractions and Dennis, Louisa, Mick and myself had a delightful few hours sightseeing around the beautiful cathedral, mooching around food markets, eating and drinking in pleasant surroundings and generally 'hanging loose'. Dennis, pipe in place as usual, was in good form with his stories ... all in all it was a very relaxing experience.

Consulting the map of St. Gallen, Mick and I had a difference of opinion about the best way back to the train station much to the amusement of a local woman who obviously felt she had to intervene. Mick, aside from being a Maître d'Escrime, is in fact a well qualified ski instructor with honed survival skills, the Ray Mears of the BAF if you will, and for the record the derogatory remarks I made about his map reading skills during the trip were only made in jest (mostly).

Thursday – Senior Men's Degen

Liam, Mick and I competed in the Senior Men's Epée – the only event for which we had a complete team. Liam had a very purposeful look on his face and was 'in the zone' focusing on a Master at Arms medal.

I had found fencing foil very frustrating physically earlier in the week and was hoping I could salvage some satisfaction from the épée. As it was I enjoyed the event, scored some good hits, beat an Italian soundly and had a bit of a laugh with the French team (mostly World Cup fencers) who simply out-classed everyone. One example of the skill the French displayed was a beautifully executed counter-time action using an inch perfect false attack by 1-2 to draw my stop hit to the top of his arm that he evaded in order to hit me under the wrist ... cracking hit mate! Watching these guys fence underlined the fact that on BAF courses we teach what is relevant to fencing today ... why do I say this? Well, the BAF trains coaches to understand tactics and develop the sword in

Continued on page 8 overleaf.....



hand skills to give lessons that enable pupils to defeat fencers like these French guys ... it's not rocket science!

I was impressed with the way in which Liam had improved his game over the course of the week. An épéeist at heart, he saved his best fencing till last, attacking on preparation, riposting and stop-hitting his way to 11th place and earning himself a bronze medal in the Master at Arms. It was a very good result for Liam and with me 15th and Mick 16th our epee team finished in 4th place.

The closing ceremony followed the medal giving and a barbeque was laid on for the competitors and delegates. The behaviour at the meal was pretty raucous and there was some very sarcastic and verbose 'back slapping' from the French and Spanish competitors when the organiser gave a speech ... I really don't think the guy realised how little respect people had for his organisational skills!

Friday – Departure & Conclusion

I was looking forward to getting home ... the months of preparation leading up to the event and the event itself had taken its toll. Louisa, Dennis, Mick and I all made our way to Zurich Airport via the efficient train network (50 minutes precisely) and took the time before our flights to have a coffee and mull over the week in Flawil.

There was no doubt that the team had enjoyed their fencing and produced some very creditable results. Our morale had been high as a team and we had enjoyed supporting each other in Flawil. I was moved to hear people talking enthusiastically about coming back in 4 years and winning more medals and it made me feel that, despite the appalling lack of Swiss organisation before and during the event, it had been very worthwhile going.

Lastly, I can't help but feel that Mike Joseph, had he still been with us, would have felt a great deal of pride in the way our team conducted itself and represented our academy. Certainly, I'm very proud of what we achieved in Switzerland. Well done chaps!

Peter Cormack, Team Captain/Manager



The photographs accompanying this article were supplied by Peter Cormack and Liam Harrington.

Captions inspired by www.imdb.com

THEATRICAL FENCING - A NEW COMMITTEE POST

Stage & Screen Theatrical Fencing is becoming increasingly popular within the fencing community worldwide. The AAI have been holding World Artistic Fencing Championships every four years for a considerable time now with the French and German Academies having a strong theatrical fencing presence.

The British Academy of Fencing has a long tradition of having amongst its ranks some of the best Fight Directors in the business, so with that in mind, the Committee have decided to co-opt an expert, currently working in this field, to advise the Committee on all matters relating to Stage & Screen Theatrical Fencing.



Hello, I'm Andy Wilkinson your new representative on the committee for all matters relating to Theatrical Fencing, that is to say, stage and film sword play.

For many years now I have been an advocate for the British Academy of Fencing to encompass the parallel skills of theatrical fencing.

In my opinion, who is better placed to raise and maintain high standards in fencing, whatever the style, than the British Academy of Fencing?

All reputable fight directors have studied fencing with either one of our coaches or a colleague overseas.

Now for the first time, supported by our President Prof. Philip Bruce, the Academy has created a post on the committee to oversee all aspects of Theatrical Fencing, including the World Artistic Fencing Championships through to Theatrical Fencing Workshops, for those members who wish to explore this exciting avenue of our profession.

It has been ten years since the Academy last won a gold medal at the Artistic Fencing Championships in Vichy, France. It is about time we won again.

I am therefore today announcing a CALL TO ARMS to all fencers, Theatrical Fencers, fight directors and coaches, suitably trained and skilled to a high level, to step forward for selection to represent Great Britain and the Academy in the next World Championships, to be held in Portugal in 2012.



Selection for the squad will be by a special panel of experts working in this field.

All entries will be by AAI rules and conditions which will be published on the Academy website in due course.

A series of selection dates and locations will be announced in 2011 for teams or pairs to audition.

In the mean time I am currently asking members to contact me if they would be interested in a basic theatrical fencing workshop in their area.

Please do access the Academy web site where the very latest information on Theatrical Fencing, AAI Championships and workshops can be found.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Andy Wilkinson

Theatrical Fencing Committee Member 2010

Andy Wilkinson is an active member of the Academy and has been for over 24 years. He is a full time film Sword Master and Director specialising in 2nd Unit and Action Unit Directing. Andy is a member of Stunts Unlimited, Equity, The Directors' Guild of Great Britain, Directors UK, The Writers' Guild of Great Britain, BECTU and is a BAFTA voting member (Directors' Chapter) for film & TV. Andy's multi-media entertainment company 'Wilkinson Productions Ltd' is based at Pinewood Studios, England.

The action photos on this page have been kindly supplied by Jon Head Photography. For more details and for copies of photos from the BAF Diamond Swords weekend, go to www.jonheadphotography.com and use the reference BAF901.



Jon Head Photography
www.jonheadphotography.com
01789 26 26 26

CHRIS'S COGITATIONS

Musings from your Members' Rep.



What are the skills of a good fencing coach? I know for a fact that Czajkowski has said many things on the matter, oft quoted, and I won't repeat them here. However, I do have a few thoughts of my own on the matter inspired by coaches I have met over the last few years.

In addition to the purely 'coaching' skills, wouldn't it also be useful to be:

A referee

Coaching skills and drills in isolation, although improving the fencer's technique, timing and distance, will not always account for another factor involved in winning a bout - the referee.

I have been known to tell my pupils that they have two distinct but complementary goals on the piste which are both necessary to win. The first is to hit the opponent without being hit themselves. The second, to show the referee what he needs to see to award that hit. By understanding the thought process of the referee, and following current refereeing practice, we can better instruct our pupils to do just that.

An armourer

On a practical level, armoury is a useful skill to have. When supervising a large group on electric scoring equipment, being able to identify a fault a pupil is experiencing (as if by magic, in the pupil's eyes) allows you to spend less time fussing over equipment and more time developing the fencers in the group.

This skill also allows you to teach your pupils how to maintain their own weapons, so that they will always be prepared for competitions - no excuses! This skill could also be used to derive a complementary source of income, running armoury courses or fixing weapons and an appropriate qualification will help you to sell such services by giving your customers a guarantee of your skills.

A sport scientist and nutritionist

The Academy encourages us to develop a knowledge of sport science, including physiology and psychology, through its literature and exam system. By understanding how the athlete works, you can ensure that you get the best out of them in terms of performance, and assist in avoiding injury, whilst helping them to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

All of us can already do this to some extent, but imagine the possibilities if you truly understood your pupils' physical capabilities and how to extend them.

So how do you learn these things and put them into practice? Unfortunately, they will take time, effort and opportunity. You will have to provide the time and the effort yourselves, but as for the opportunity, perhaps this is something you would like to see the Academy provide in the future?

Please let me know your thoughts by e-mail to chriseasthambaf@hotmail.co.uk.

On another note, does anyone have any generic words of wisdom that they like to impart to their pupils, which they would be happy for me to reprint here - anonymity can be guaranteed if required!

Chris Eastham - Members' Representative

BAF RESIDENTIAL COURSES 2010

Autumn Course - 25th to 30th October 2010

Fees for the Course

Residential (Single room): £378 (BAF Member) £434 (Non-member) £298 (Performer)

Non-residential £276 (BAF Member) £317 (Non-member) £180 (Performer)

Course to be held at Denstone College, Staffordshire.

Places on this course are in demand, so don't delay!

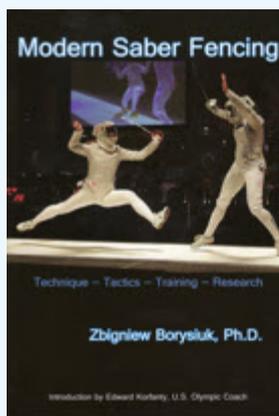
Contact Dave Jerry, the Course Officer, to ensure your place.

Contact details are on page 3 and further details can be found on our web site.

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.

REVIEWS



Modern Saber Fencing

Technique-Tactics-Training-Research
SKA Swordplay Books

Zbigniew Borysiuk PhD

As I am presently engaged in the task of preparing for the sabre diploma, I was naturally very pleased to see this book come out. I anticipated that it, with its accompanying DVD, to be a very useful resource as it claims to present “the scientific research that underlies the latest training methods”. There is certainly a need for such books and this one is attractively presented and appears to promise a great deal.

It is unfortunate that it does not quite live up to this initial promise. Anyone interested in practical, sword in hand training will be bitterly disappointed. The book starts with a history of the sabre and a bizarrely basic introductory guide to the weapon -- including description of the on guard position and lunge, and photos of ‘what a sabre looks like’, ‘what a sabre lamé looks like’, and so on, all of which would make a very nice beginners’ guide to sabre, but seems a out of place in this kind of book.

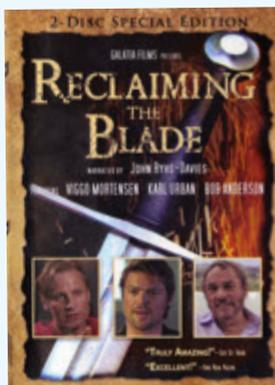
It is only about a third of the way in that we get to practical sabre coaching and even then, we only get about 28 pages of that! It is perfectly clear, efficient stuff and interesting in its way but not a lot more than any of our Advanced/Diploma coaches would already be familiar with.

Almost any coach in this country can derive a good deal of bitter amusement from the subsequent chapters on talent identification, selecting fencers to train, and how to develop (pretty much full time) training schedules, and the details of managing nutrition. By his own admission, he is talking about preparing fencers for “Cadet and Junior championships, and World Cups, as well as National, European or World Championships”. All very interesting and worthy, without a doubt but not all that relevant to the majority of working coaches in this country. I have nothing against this being included, but it does take up almost half the book.

The attached DVD makes up in some respects for the shortcomings of the book, as it will be useful for anyone who would benefit from seeing basic tactical lessons being given in a clear and relaxed manner, with a minimum of irritating theatrics. We are shown basically the same lesson given to a series of fencers of different standards and if nothing else, it will reaffirm the validity of what is already being taught at the ‘deep end’ at Denstone.

I was very pleased to find the book, and bought it with high hopes. In some ways, it is a useful addition to a fencing library. However there is no getting away from the fact that it by no means justifies its price of £32. Any hard up trainee coach’s money would be better spent on a copy of Czajkowski’s *Understanding Fencing* and in watching a few sabre lessons from some of our own BAF masters!

Isobel Combes



Reclaiming the Blade

A DVD by Galatia Films

Although the overall premise of this documentary is a little confusing at times, it does cover a wide variety of topics concerning the sword in history in an entertaining and informative manner. It basically tries to show the influence of the sword on history, how swordplay has been presented, how it has developed into our sport of fencing and how there is now a growing body of people trying to research the techniques of mediaeval and Renaissance swordplay through practical fighting.

After the introductory section, the DVD starts with a look at how swordplay has been presented on film, from “The Vikings” to “Star Wars”. Film buffs will have hours of fun trying to put names to the dozens of clips shown. This section also heavily features our own President of Honour, Bob Anderson. He gives his own views through interviews, whilst some of the actors, with whom he has worked, speak of his work with awe.

Swordplay on the stage is also covered and is well illustrated by John and Jonathan Waller, of the Royal Armouries at Leeds, whose contribution to the research of swordplay has been enormous.

There are brief sections on the manufacture of swords, illustrated by the work done by WETA Workshops for the “Lord of the Rings” trilogy, the refinement of 17th century swordplay into modern “sports” fencing, and the activities of re-enactment societies.

Much of the documentary, however, is taken up with the work being done by various societies to research, through contemporary texts, the skills of mediaeval and Renaissance swordplay. This is not re-enactment, nor are they choreographed fights for entertainment. Instead, many such societies practise fighting with these methods “for real”. They are keen to point out that modern sport fencing is somewhat artificial, with its rules on corps-à-corps and the ban on the use of the un-armed hand, since the type of fighting they practise involves much more than simple swordplay, but also includes elements of wrestling and using all parts of the sword, including the pommel.

I found this film to be very entertaining, even if the overall structure is a bit patchy, flitting from one topic to another without a logical thread. The main DVD is 78 minutes long and is narrated excellently by John Rhys-Davies, but there is also a second DVD of over three hours of “extras” - more interviews, a WETA Workshop featurette, over an hour of sword training videos and much more. Great value, especially if you do a bit of online research. I obtained my copy through Amazon.co.uk at less than half the recommended price.

Bob Merry



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