

British Academy of Fencing **ACADEMY NEWS**

**February 2011
Issue 59**

"Run by coaches for coaches"



TOM GETS LIFE

At the recent AGM, Life Membership of the Academy was bestowed on Professor Tom Etchells, who has retired from the Committee after over 20 years service.

Tom joined the Committee shortly after qualifying as a full Diploma Master in 1987 and has served the Academy in a number of roles since that time. His first job was as the Awards Administrator, a post he fulfilled with typical efficiency and took the system from the old pen and paper era into the computer age. He then spent some time as Treasurer, before taking on the job of Course Officer, which he continued with for some considerable time, even after being elevated to being one of the Vice Presidents of the Academy. He has also served in recent years on the SSTT, assisting in producing the vast amount of material we now have and in reforming the examination system.

We asked him what he would consider to be his main achievements from this long period of service. Tom singled out the organisation of the visit to the Royal Armouries of Professor Czajkowski and the development of Denstone as the place we now hold our residential courses, making them self-sufficient in the process. He also took pride in helping a number of coaches, particularly in the North West, to progress their careers, with some reaching the pinnacle of Full Diploma Master status.

When asked how he felt about retiring from the Committee, Tom admitted to being a bit emotional and there being a sense now of something missing. But he felt it was time to move aside and let "new blood" come through. He also said that it didn't really feel like work, because he wanted to do it and also learned so much in the process.

With regard to the Life Membership, Tom said he felt very honoured and even humbled. He had felt that he did not deserve the honour and had had to be persuaded to accept it. It was obvious from the standing ovation that those at the AGM Dinner gave Tom, as he accepted a certificate and inscribed decanter, that many thought that this honour was not only well-deserved, but overdue. We are sure that anyone in the Academy who has been touched by the work Tom has performed in his various roles in the Academy will agree and wish Tom well in the future.



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***Contributions by April 10th,
please***



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Sylwia Gruchala two time Olympic medalist

YOUR COMMITTEE**President:**

Prof. Philip Bruce
190 Ashurst Road
Peel Hall, Manchester M22 5AZ
Tel: 0161 498 6625
Email: pbruce.baf@btinternet.com

Vice-President:

Prof. Peter Cormack
52 Queens Road
Kenilworth, Warwickshire CV8 1JS
Tel: 01926 859881
Email: cormack@nthworld.com

Vice-President:

Prof. Louisa Miller
84 Avon Street
Warwick, Warwickshire CV34 4PX
Tel: 01926 494 145
Email: louisajmiller@hotmail.com

Treasurer:

Prof. Liam Harrington
76 Varney Road, Hemel Hempstead
Herts. HP1 2LR
Tel: 07712 633106
email: harringtonliam@hotmail.com

Secretary:

Prof. Bob Merry
6 Birkdale Close, Bramhall
Stockport, Cheshire SK7 2LN
Tel: 0161 440 9613
email: bobmerrybaf@aol.com

Members' Representative:

Stuart Clough
1 Yew Tree Cottages
Brown Street
Old Newton, Stowmarket IP14 4QB
Tel: 07886 708392
Email: stuart@cloughfencing.co.uk

Assistant Secretary and Course Officer:

Provost Dave Jerry
Orchard Rise, Churchtown
Belton, Doncaster DN9 1PE
Tel: 01427 874109
email: david.jerry@free.newsurf.net

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

Prof. Leon Hill

International Secretary:

Prof. Philip Bruce

Child Protection Officer, Welfare Officer:

Prof. Louisa Miller

Chairman, Disciplinary Sub-Committee

Prof. Peter Cormack

Proficiency Awards Administrator:

Steve Morley
Green Lane Farm
Stonham
Stowmarket IP14 5DS
Tel: 01449 711698
email: awards@baf-fencing.org

Membership Secretary:

Sarah Paveley
Rutherford Lodge, Wixoe
Stoke by Clare
Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 8UE
Tel: 01440 785600
email: sarah.fencing@jacobiteltd.com

Editor - Academy News, Insurance, Examination**Results Coordinator:**

Prof. Bob Merry

Film & Theatre Representative:

Andy Wilkinson
The Cottage, The Common
Kinsbourne Green
Harpندن, Herts. AL5 3NT
Tel: 01582 713052
email: andyawilkinson@hotmail.com

USEFUL INFORMATION**ACADEMY
WEB SITE**

**FOR ALL THE LATEST
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THE ACADEMY WEB SITE
AT**

WWW.BAF-FENCING.ORG

**RECOMMENDED
RATES OF PAY**

<u>Level</u>	<u>Rate</u>
Diploma	37.75
Maitre d'Esgrime 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).....		£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.....



The AGM Dinner

At the end of the meal and on behalf of the committee, I made the following presentations:

Award of Merit to Peter Cormack, in recognition of his captaincy of our 2010 team in the Fencing Masters World Championship

BAF Honorary Diploma to Andy Wilkinson for an "Outstanding Contribution to the Art of Theatrical Fencing for Stage & Screen"

Full Diplomas to Alistair Urquhart and Isobel Combes

Life Membership to Tom Etchells

I've known Tom since my early teens, since the days when his son Graham fenced. I really got to know him when we were training for the Academy's diploma. It was during this training I discovered his need and willingness to work hard and his attention to detail. During the training we had our ups and downs. I especially remember a night when we sat in the hall talking about what we should do and then after almost two hours went to the pub. And the night, just a couple of weeks before our final examination, when Leon very proudly informed us that the Academy had just published a new syllabus and list of questions. Tom's reaction wasn't exactly complimentary and he had a few choice words to say about wasting his time, having worked so damned hard. Just a few weeks later he breezed through Diploma épée. That was almost 25 years ago. It seems that Tom joined the Academy committee the day after he passed; of course, he didn't, but he did join the committee at the next

AGM. In all those years on the committee he:

has been Proficiency Awards Administrator (pre computers)

has been Treasurer (again pre-computers and in hard backed ledgers)

has staffed numerous one day, weekend and residential courses

has been Course officer, organising numerous one day and weekend courses all over the country, an International course with Dr Cjajkowski and our residential courses for well over 10 years

has been an examiner at numerous examinations

has served on the disciplinary sub-committee

has been a member of the SSTT for over 10 years and, as a result, is a co-author of all Academy documentation for our examinations and coaching key points booklets

He has been one of the most supportive and hard working members that Academy has ever known. There isn't a member that doesn't owe him a debt of thanks and appreciation.

It took almost 4 years to get Tom to accept life membership, because in his own words, he doesn't think he's done anything special and he just got on with getting the job done.

I've known Tom for almost forty years and I can honestly say that I can think of no one more deserving

Philip Bruce

AGM

The AGM heard reports from each of the committee members, with the exception of Dave Jerry, who was absent enjoying his second summer in 12 months by visiting Australia

Election of Officers

President: *Philip Bruce*

Vice Presidents: *Peter Cormack and Louisa Miller*

Secretary: *Bob Merry*

Treasurer: *Liam Harrington*

Assistant Sec: *Dave Jerry*

Committee Member: *Steven Morley*

Members Rep: *Stuart Clough*

After over 20 years of service, Tom Etchells announced that he was standing down from the committee. Spontaneously, and somewhat uncharacteristically of the AGM, we stood on unison and gave Tom a standing ovation. Speaking personally, and perhaps for all those who have served with Tom, I will miss his input.

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.

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

Robert Pryer
Ronin Traynor

Nottingham
Slough

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

MOTIVATIONAL QUOTE

If you aren't going all the way, why go at all?

Joe Namath

(American Football Quarterback)

COMMENT

SUPPORT THE "NEWS"

Academy News is one of the services that the BAF supplies to its members. Naturally, this costs money and we hope that we provide good value. One way we try to offset some of the cost is through advertising. Our advertisers support us and we hope that they can see the benefit of getting 300 coaches on their side. You can help us to convince them of the value of advertising by mentioning Academy News when you, or your pupils, order equipment from them.

Of course, the other major way to support Academy News is through contributions. Use the News as a channel to communicate with the Committee and fellow members.

We wish you a belated Happy New Year and a successful 2011.

Bob Merry, Editor

Letters

From Martin Behmber

With regard to the article "The Past Remembered" in the last issue, the presentation of the plaque to me from David Austin was received with great honour.

Myself and his grandchildren, whom he sadly never saw, will treasure it for all time. It takes pride of place in our house with a photo of him underneath it.

Thank you to David once again for his time to bring it to us, as we have very little memorabilia of my father. He was so indulged in his work as a Professor of fencing and dedicated teacher of what he believed in, work was never brought home.

Yours sincerely

Martin Behmber & Family

THE OLDEST MASTER?

By Derek Evered

Master Coach (he preferred that title rather than Professor) Bela Imregi from Hungary retired from coaching fencers when he was aged 83 years. Just prior to this I saw him flèching repeatedly up and down the gymnasium against his pupil, the then current Amateur Sabre Champion of Great Britain, Jim Philbin.

Professor Leon Crosnier was master to the Scottish Fencing Club in 1909. He died in 1972 when he had sustained Scottish fencing for two generations. I had the good fortune to have a few excellent individual foil lessons from "Papa" Crosnier after the elderly Maître Lucien Morel died. Leon Crosnier was then in his 80's, but was very modern in his teaching. Thus he insisted that the disengagement should be made in one movement. As he put it in his inimitable French accent, "Wiz ze transport" (moving forwards in a spiral). Yet in the excellent book written by his son Professor Roger Crosnier, our very first National Fencing Coach (Fencing with the Foil, 1951), a partial practice is recommended: under the opposing blade by finger action then extend the arm to make the hit. That is a single movement in two-time and a bad habit, hard to correct. The bent sword arm would provoke a counter attack, especially with electric foil. Surely one should never teach a wrong movement.

Professor Ernest Froeschlen, another French master, also had a long career. His eccentricity was to end each individual foil lesson by scoring a hit on his pupil, usually by a compound riposte. Apparently during World War One he had taught army officers to duel with sharp swords. That skill is not included in the BAF examination syllabuses.

Who is the oldest active fencing coach you know?

PICTURES FROM THE AGM



Peter Cormack receives an Award of Merit



A special Diploma goes to Andy Wilkinson



Now it's Professor Alasdair Urquhart....



....and Professor Isobel Combes



Tom Etchells and Leon Hill enjoy the occasion



New Vice-Presidents Louisa Miller and Peter Cormack



The bar was ever popular!



The jokes got better as the night wore on!

CHARACTERISTICS OF CONTEMPORARY FENCING

By Professor Doctor Zbigniew Czajkowski

"The exercising of weapons putteth away aches, griefs and diseases; it expelleth melancholic, cholericke and evil conceits; it keepeth a man in breath, perfect health and long lyfe."

George Silver, 1599

"Fencing is as much a mind game as a physical test. Even though you face one another through the mesh in the mask, your confrontation with opponents is eyeball to eyeball, with all the mental pressure this entails."

Terence Kingston, 2001

Human beings from prehistoric times were forced to fight – against nature, animals, and other people. Hence, the necessity to have weapons and to know how to use them. The weapons change from very primitive ones (stones, pieces of wood) to more complicated (axes, arches, lances, swords, rapiers, épées and so on). Humans had to learn how to use various weapons and this is the origin of fencing. Fencing is a bout between two armed men with the desire to hit one's opponent and to avoid being hit oneself. So, it was necessary to develop energy abilities (strength, speed and endurance) and co-ordination abilities (motor learning ability, skilful execution of movements) and tactical abilities (appropriate choice of action). The ways of fighting and training today make fencing a very modern, complicated sport, developing energy abilities, coordination, speed and accuracy of perception, various aspects of attention, many sensory-motor skills (fencing actions), the appropriate kind and level of motivation and arousal. Fencing nowadays is only a sport and not a preparation for duel or war.

The words of the Fencing Master in Molière's "Citizen Turn'd Gentleman", 1670, are very well-known and define the essence of fencing as giving hits without receiving them. Thus, fencing may be briefly defined as the art of wielding weapons with the intention of touching the opponent, by cut or thrust, while avoiding being hit oneself.

In a real fight – fencing with sharp weapons in war, combat, or duel – the aim of the fight was to kill or wound the opponent in as short a time as possible.

Until very recently, the art of wielding cutting and thrusting weapons had still its place in army: bayonet, cavalry sabre, lance.

Since the XX century (especially after the Second World War), when we talk of fencing, we mean, nearly always, fencing as a sport. Contemporary fencing, in its athletic form, consists of a fight and preparation for competition between two opponents – equally armed with conventional weapons – according to established forms and rules. The aim of this sportive combat is to score on one's opponent the maximum number of conventional hits, in a given time, while attempting to avoid being hit oneself, or, at least to receive as few hits as possible.

Apart from the modern sport of fencing, one can distinguish stage fencing and various national systems of fencing and wheel fencing for disabled people.

Stage fencing is the art of wielding various types of old weapons, according to the style and tradition of the period depicted in the play, and also in accordance with the specific demands of the theatre. In stage fencing, various factors are concerned such as: knowledge of a variety of weapons; knowledge of the history of fencing; salutes, movements and manners of different periods; as well as the dexterity and general fitness of the actor. Apart from this, fencing is a well-known and efficacious way of achieving the physical fitness and grace of movement of an actor, used in schools of drama, ballet and film.

In several countries, old national forms of fencing are still known and cultivated, such as kendo in Japan, Parikaoba in Georgia, etc.

The sport of fencing shapes many valuable sensory-motor skills (motor habit patterns) and various kinds of sensory-motor reactions. It develops various energy and co-ordination abilities – strengthens and exercises muscles, ligaments and joints; has a beneficial effect on the nervous and respiratory systems and on blood circulation; and improves the general health and functional and adaptive capacity of the organism. It also improves perception, concentration and other aspects of attention (level of attention, divisibility, range of attention, external and internal attention, narrow and wide attention), imagination, quick analytical thinking, orientation in space and time, and speed of reaction.

The practise of fencing does not require large sports grounds or expensive installations and is independent of the season of the year.

Fencing develops lightning speed orientation; the ability to concentrate during a bout; a certain craftiness in misleading the opponent; the ability to observe and reconnoitre the technique, reflexes and intentions of the opponent; and improves such traits as ambition, self-control, self-confidence and positive motivation (the right contents, direction and level of general motivation, plus a motive of success and task involvement in achievement motivation).

A fencing bout is a clash of two systems of tactics. Success in the "tactical battle" depends on: early and good reconnaissance of the opponent (his strong and weak points, style of fencing, favourite actions, and speed); forcing one's own intentions on the opponent; application of judicious tactics, often varying from bout to bout.

The sport of fencing develops unusual co-ordination of movements of the whole body (gross co-ordination) and hand and fingers (fine co-ordination), resulting, among other things, from the necessity of immediate action in an extremely short time – a fencer usually acts with a strong "deficit of time" – and depending on the development of the situation on the piste. Fencing also requires and develops the ability to keep one's own balance while executing fast, varied, precise, and sometimes very complicated movements – it even sometimes demands strict co-ordination, and sometimes complete independence, of movement of the arms and legs. By cultivating fencing, one exercises all muscles, but – above all – the extensors. Fencing exercises and bouts develop suppleness, flexibility, dexterity, nimbleness, and agility.

Fencing is, par excellence, a fast sport, in every sense of the word (speed of perception, speed of reaction, speed of movement, fast change of action, change of rhythm, etc. – much more complicated than the speed of a runner or swimmer). Speed in fencing is a combination of energy ("physical") fitness abilities and co-ordination abilities. It also increases the speed and accuracy of perception and speed of reaction. Energy abilities are connected with the effort capacity of all organs, systems, and the organism as a whole, whereas co-ordination abilities are connected, above all, with the functional co-operation of the receptors, nervous system, and motor system (muscles).

Fencing develops many co-ordination capabilities, which may be divided into three groups: motor educability (the ability to learn new strokes and to change "old" motor habit patterns), motor control (the ability to precisely direct one's movement), and motor adaptability (the ability to execute and apply various fencing actions in a changeable manner, in very varied and often

unpredicted situations). In this respect, fencing (like other combat sports and games) differs considerably – both in its contents, methods of training, and performance – from sports with closed motor skills (like gymnastics, acrobatics, etc.).

As a special kind of motor adaptability, I distinguish lightning-like speed improvisation, the essence of which is to apply, during a bout, a movement or set of movements – based on elementary skills – which have never been executed in such a way during practise.

In directing the weapon with the fingers, one acquires “sentiment de fer” and increases the sensitivity of tactile sense; apart from which fencing increases, to a high degree, kinesthetic sensitivity.

Big fencing competitions frequently last several days, during which a competitor may have many hours of bouting with interludes every day, particularly if he is taking part in more than one weapon (which recently happens rather rarely) and in both individual and team events – which is a most exacting and difficult test of stamina, psychological endurance, and specific fitness.

Many coaches identify the term endurance with long-distance running, which is, of course, utterly wrong as long distance running is connected with long, monotonous effort, rhythmic movements, lack of an opponent and a change of situation, aerobic processes, and slow-twitch muscle fibres. In fencing, the effort is very short and fast, entailing anaerobic processes, fast-twitch muscle fibres, facing an opponent and constant change of situation, and the effort is not continuous (including the interludes between bouts and within the bouts, themselves). Contrary to many author’s opinions, I consider endurance to be a highly specific ability and there are different kinds of endurance: that of a watch-maker, surgeon, marathon runner, figure skater, orchestra conductor, car driver, sprinter, soccer player, typist, film director, singer, pianist, smith, ballet dancer, fencer, etc. I define endurance as resistance to fatigue in a given, specific variety of activity. Long-distance running, of course, does not develop fencing endurance. Fencing-specific endurance, according to me, means resistance to perceptual fatigue (closely watching the opponent; speed and accuracy of perception; a high level, and many other qualities, of attention; fast and appropriate reaction); cognitive (mental), fatigue (trying to assess the opponent’s tactics; fast analysis of the opponent’s, and one’s own, movements; choosing the right tactics; drawing immediate conclusions during and after the bout); emotional fatigue (state of anxiety; stressful situations; desire to win; trying to avoid failure; joy; despair; hope; lack of confidence; etc.); and – for a trained fencer, the least important – “physical” fatigue.

Because of the great significance of precise, versatile and varied technique; experience; psychological factors (self-control, concentration, positive intrinsic motivation, motive of success, the appropriate level of arousal); and tactics; fencing is a sport which may be cultivated from early youth up to a ripe old age. Older competitors compensate for a certain loss of speed and endurance by better technique, experience, more mature tactical solutions and also by fencing-specific motor responses (different varieties of reaction).

There are the following varieties of sensory-motor reactions: simple reaction, choice reaction, differential reaction, reaction to a pre-signal, reaction to a moving object, change of action during its execution and intuitive reaction.

The development and perfection of a whole complex of physical and psychological traits and abilities – as well as the constant improvement of technical, technical-tactical, and tactical capabilities – are indispensable for a fencer.

In a modern, very mobile, fencing bout, specific energy fitness – strength and endurance, as well as specific speed – and specific co-ordination abilities are very necessary. Capability and

skill in manipulating the weapon, and tactical capabilities, are extremely important and, in a certain sense, decisive.

But this is not enough – one also has to have very strong, well-exercised muscles of the arms and legs. Strong and elastic legs are necessary for: mastery of the fencing stance; purposeful displacements on the fencing strip; executing lunges, balestras, and fleches (very important here is the combination of strength and speed – power – especially in executing fast lunges and fleches). Muscular strength of the arms and fingers (plus fine co-ordination) allows long, continued and untiring holding and manipulation of the weapon, brisk beats on the opponent’s blade, strong binds, and parrying with the middle part of the blade – as it is not always possible to parry with forte, especially in epee at a long distance.

One cannot overestimate the significance of speed in fencing. Nowadays, one cannot imagine a great fencing champion who would not be very fast. One must, however, bear in mind that speed of assessment of a situation, and speed of motor responses (the latent period of reaction) – combined with sense of timing (sense of surprise) – is, by far, more important, although less visible, than speed of execution of movements (the executory, or effector, period of reaction).

To be able to achieve sudden changes of direction, varied rhythm of movement, and to attain a high turn of speed, a fencer must relax muscles and give suppleness and fluency to his movements while he is executing preparatory movements such as reconnoitring, manoeuvring for the proper distance, trying to catch his opponent by surprise, etc. With fencers with rigid muscles who usually fence as if they were glued to the piste, intention of executing a blade movement is nearly always “signalled” by excessive amplitude and rigidity of movement which not only slows their own actions, but also acts as a warning signal for the opponent.

A beautiful, efficient and fast style of fencing depends on economic and relaxed movements, in which only the appropriate group of muscles contract with adequate intensity and rhythm, and with the proper co-operation (relaxation) of antagonistic muscles.

On the psychological side, motivation and – strictly connect with it – arousal are the most important basic attributes. One could say that proper training and success in competition are a consequence of the right kind and level of motivation, and the intensity of arousal. It requires the optimal contents, direction, and level of motivation, and the appropriate level of arousal to conscientiously and diligently repeat, again and again, exercises which are difficult and may be tedious. Only ambition and the appropriate level of a motive of success can enable a fencer to make the sustained and obstinate effort needed to improve his fencing capabilities, to overcome difficulties and obstacles, to keep up his desire to fight in spite of fatigue and unfavourable conditions of a bout, and to reach the best possible results in tournaments.

As far as achievement motivation (a set of motives occurring in situations of fight, rivalry, external assessment) is concerned, many coaches think that the best is a very high, nearly maniacal, motive of success (“victory at any cost”) and very hard, tedious, murderous effort. My opinion, based on many, many years of practical experience and careful observation, is that the best and most effective – both for the results in competitions and the development of the pupil’s personality – are the following component parts of achievement motivation: an optimum, appropriate level of motive of success – desire to win, desire to compete, belief in one’s success, but not victory is everything; task involvement – the desire to improve one’s knowledge, skills, abilities and capabilities; feeling of independence, responsibility, and self-confidence; and sport enjoyment – getting pleasure out of training and competing, love of fencing (emotional factor) and interest in fencing (mental factor).

So far in trying to characterise fencing as a sport, I have emphasised its general value and attraction, and the beneficial effects on the fencer himself. Let us consider now, more deeply perhaps, what makes fencing such a peculiarly attractive and valuable sport in comparison with other disciplines which, after all, are easier to cultivate, more "natural", easier to understand and appreciate, and which also give pleasure, are healthful and educational.

It seems to me that the specific charm of fencing and its high value in the whole family of various sports lies in the close combination of the following factors:

1. The sheer joy of a fast, mobile and versatile fight with a light weapon in the face of kaleidoscopic, unexpected changes of the tactical situation.

2. Exceptional and decisive significance of psychological traits and intellect in the fencing bout, including psychomotor abilities (psychological processes – like perception, reaction, decision making – strongly connected with motor activity).

3. Rich, romantic and historical tradition of fencing which stirs the imaginations of not only youths.

4. The possibility of cultivating fencing from youth to well above middle age.

5. The exceptionally high social and educational value of fencing as an attractive form of preparation for life and work in the contemporary world; gross and fine motor abilities, a high level of perception, and various qualities of attention (a high level of concentration, range of attention, selectivity of attention, divisibility of attention, shifting of attention) are very practical and useful in modern life, professional work, artistic activity, driving a car, using various apparatuses, etc. Unlike fencing, weight-lifting, running, and so on, develop mostly muscles and physical abilities and are not so useful in contemporary life and work.

The last point underlines the fact that physical culture, of which sport is the most important form in the modern world, serves as preparation for life, productive activity, transport, communication, fighting, etc., and for fulfilling one's role in a society of a given epoch, nation, class and state.

Taking all this into consideration fencing, perhaps the oldest sport in the world, is, paradoxically enough, the most modern of sports – that is, the most versatile and best adapted to the life and activity of the XXI century.

There have been times in the history of mankind when sheer muscular strength and unusual physical endurance and toughness, played a colossal and dominant role in struggles against forces of nature, animals and other people, as well as in primitive productive activity.

Nowadays, however, with a high degree of development of productive forces; an outburst of development of technique at the service of human beings; with a colossal increase in forms and speed of transport and communication; with the steady increase of application of various machines, installations, apparatuses and precise steering mechanisms; with the extreme bustle and hurry of modern life; the following traits, abilities and attributes take on a decisive importance: very fine co-ordination of movement without the use of sheer force; delicate manipulation of fingers; high development of kinesthetic sense; the ability for long-sustained concentration of attention, its divisibility and shifting; spatial orientation and fast reaction in constant and rapid changes of situations; the ability to make instant decisions; the ability to make a rapid and purposeful change of decision while executing an action.

These attributed skills and abilities are more and more necessary in modern industry, in research laboratories, while driving a car, flying, in military activity, etc. And these are the very traits which are shaped and developed while cultivating fencing.

The task of a good coach is to patiently perfect these qualities in his pupils so that they may transfer them from the narrow field of the fencing strip to their work, life and study. The considerable social and educational value of fencing is not a spontaneous quality, but has to be carefully fostered and influenced by the coach and affected by the attitude of fellow athletes.

It has to be realised that, without suitable pedagogical influence, certain attributes and attitudes shaped by sport, may exert a negative influence. For example: fencers, badly handled, may exhibit such unfortunate characteristics as aggressiveness, egocentrism, selfishness, quarrelsomeness, and lack of consideration for others. This is why the necessity of intertwining technical teaching and pedagogical influence in the process of training is so important. Taking this into consideration, one must realise that the best styles of leadership in coaching – to enhance a rich development of a pupil's personality and allow him to play many social roles in life – are the co-operative and friendly style.

While doing full justice to the social aspects of fencing and underlining its instrumental meaning, we must not forget its autonomous meaning – a fine glow of achievement, a feeling of physical fitness, longevity and strong muscles are not only important for productive work and its social consequences, but are in themselves of high value for the development and happiness of the individual.

The Polish scientist Andrzej Tyska, in his most interest essay on the humanistic values of sports, very truthfully says, "A person, as an individual, has a right to health as such, and not only to health as an uninterrupted capacity for productive work – he has a right to joyful longevity in the fullness of strength as such, and not in order to avoid becoming an early pensioner, burdening the social budget. The value of a successful life is independent and can be found, among others, in sports, physical recreation, enjoyment of watching and playing matches. Among the humanistic values of life, sport is not the only one, but not the last of independent values."

A good lesson and a fencing bout is a pleasant experience which allows one to shake off tiredness and gives a feeling of well-being, optimism and energy – probably because fencing absorbs so much thought, strength and concentration, that it eliminates worries and every day troubles.

Some year ago, Dr. Roger Tredgold, an excellent sabreur and psychiatrist, pertinently summed up the good points of sabre fencing: "Life is full of frustrations today and many jobs lead to emotional tension which is better relieved in action than pent-up. No doubt many people express on the football or cricket field antagonism engendered against their superiors, or sometimes even against their wives. But the cricket-, tennis- or foot-ball is far less satisfying in this way than the body of one's opponent on the piste and, in my experience, far less easy to hit. And, of course, there can be no doubt that it is more blessed to give (if not to receive) a cut with a sabre than a touch with a foil. This is why most sabreurs – even if tempestuous on the piste – are such very good-tempered equable people off it. . . ."

Carrying this argument a step further one can realise that fencing, even more than other competitive sports, satisfies secret, imperfectly realised, subconscious desires such as the need to dominate; the desire for recognition and approbation; the desire for achievement and success; avoidance of failure, frustration and disappointments; the feeling of belonging to a social group; the need for friendly empathy; the need for security, adventure and aggression.

Let us then briefly consider just what attracts youths and adults to fencing.

The motivation for cultivating fencing is usually many-sided and variable. It varies according to the age, sex and the individual traits of an athlete, and undergoes changes together with the increase of skill and development of a fencer's career. Young

people, particularly children, find their way to the salle mostly under the strong influence of emotional experiences connected with romance, heroism and fencing skill displayed by heroes of novels, films and theatre. Among teenagers and young adults, the desire for and joy in energetic motor activity, fighting, rivalry, and an outlet for gregarious instincts, come to the fore. Nearly all adult fencers when talking about the pleasure they get from the sport, underline enjoyments derived from the tactical aspect of a bout such as trying to foresee the opponent's move, trying to draw a given action from him, catching him by surprise, etc.

Some people are under the spell of the personality of great fencers, their successes and travels. They read with interest interviews with fencing stars, become enthusiastic about their successes, and ask for details and impressions connected with their stay in foreign countries (for example, the great Polish sabreurs Adam Pápe, Wojciech Zabłocki and Jerzy Pawłowski published several memoirs describing, very colourfully, their adventures on the strip, travels to other countries, museums, sightseeing, meetings with interesting people, etc.). An excellent foilist, the Olympic Champion Gillian Sheen of Great Britain, told me some years ago: "Thanks to my foil I visited many foreign countries and towns and met many interesting people whom I would never have known had I not been an excellent foilist".

Another important motive for the cultivation of fencing is the possibility of raising oneself above average, developing one's personality and emphasising one's assets and value, as well as obtaining recognition and approbation. This motive was particularly important in socialist countries where there was considerable support from the government, political authorities, trade unions, press and society, in general, and where both the authorities and the public were very interested in the results of an athlete's efforts.

But practically in every country, irrespective of system, regime or religion, a leading athlete will usually gain a high social position, become popular and be rewarded with honorary titles and state awards.

Recently, due to the constantly increasing prestige of the Olympic Games and World Championships, and the increasing significance of sport in modern society, this latter motive becomes more and more important. Considering the need for appreciation and recognition, inborn in everyone, this motive for trying to achieve good results in sport is particularly significant in people blessed or perhaps cursed with keen ambition.

Another indirect motive for cultivating fencing is the desire to keep trim, in good health, and physically fit. It is interesting to note that recently in the US, a lot of detailed and interesting research was conducted to choose new forms of exercises for fitness clubs and, strangely enough (though it was not strange for me), it turned out that the most versatile, fitness-producing exercises were those taking from fencing, especially fencing footwork.

Generally speaking, however, the motives are more obvious and direct: pure pleasure in energetic movements, fame, fight, etc.

Some people are impressed by the grace and chivalry of fencing. A certain degree of snobbishness sometimes may play a part – a remnant of the times when swordsmanship was an attribute of the privileged classes. Still others are attracted by a fast, complicated game which, at the same time, is a confrontation of ideas, technique, tactics, quick reaction and motivation.

Dr. Wiktor Nawrocka, a known Polish sports psychologist, carried out, some years ago, extensive tests of leading Polish athletes from various disciplines of sport and found the following motivation for cultivating highly competitive sports:

- * desire for success, proving of one's own value, fulfilment of ambitions, which secures social recognition (51% of tested athletes);

- * need for motor activity and those pleasant emotions connected with it (25%);

- * need for rivalry and competition (18.7%),

- * fascination with the specific character of a particular sport, and overcoming difficulties arising from cultivating this sport (16.4%),

- * other motives, like reasons of health, aesthetic experiences, etc.

From her examinations and reflections it would appear that "in cultivating competitive sport, the chief role is played by motivation of a sociological nature. It also is mainly responsible for the spontaneous and powerful development of sport in civilised society."

For children, the chief motivating factors for cultivating competitive sports are: sheer pleasure of motor activity, outbursts of energy, a high level of arousal, and a feeling of gaining competence. A good coach should realise this and take advantage of it in the way he organises and conducts exercises with children.

While dealing with children, the fencing master should also cleverly take advantage of children's fascination with swords and the charm of the historical past of fencing.

As the children grow – and with adults – the important task of a good coach is to emphasise and develop the whole, rich scale of various socially positive motives for cultivating fencing while, at the same time, combating negative motivation.

With adults, he should point out the most valuable aspects of fencing as a sport:

1. Consideration of a fencing bout as a fast, versatile, game of skills, abilities, capabilities, conflict, motor responses, dexterity, dimensions of personality and traits of temperament, in which intellect, concentration and motivation play a decisive part;

2. The hygienic and educational value of fencing and its role in adaptation to life and work in modern society;

3. A pleasant and attractive way of developing one's own personality.

An article characterising fencing would be incomplete without the addition of an observation particularly pleasing to those of an aesthetic or dramatic turn of mind. Fencing – as performed by competitors of a high class, of rich and varied technique and constantly new and surprising tactical conceptions, fighting with complete concentration, ambition and motivation to win – takes on the attributes of an art; without losing its character of a sport, it can give the spectators an emotional experience as dramatic and breath-taking as any theatre or ballet. A fencing bout or the progress of a competition, with its intermingling of victory and defeat, creates tense and exciting situations, revealing to the spectator the feeling and emotions lived, at that moment, by the competitors – their triumphs and disappointments; ambition; courage, indecision or tactical cleverness. In a fencing bout, not only the physical, but the intellectual and emotional characteristics of the fencers are seen: their motivation, arousal, personality, and temperament. The graceful figure of a fencer performing, with lightness and verve, the most complicated manipulations of his weapon, is a sight full of aesthetic emotion.

Summing up, we may state that what George Silver wrote in his *Paradoxes of Defence*, more than five centuries ago (see motto), is very true and up-to-date. A good modern coach will be even able to add, and put into practise, more assets of fencing.

SOME REMINISCENCES

By Derek Ware

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet" ('Romeo & Juliet' Act II Scene 1.)



*The Italian Job
Derek Ware as 'Rozzer'*

Allow me to state at the outset that I have never considered myself to be either a Maître d'Armes or a Maître d'Esclime. Yet I can legitimately lay claim to the titles "Fight Director", "Swordmaster" and "Staged combat instructor" as these are the terms used by the theatrical profession, the film and television industries and most drama schools to describe my chief means of gainful employment between 1960 and 2005.

"So, what's the difference?", I hear you ask. Quite simply, the former - Maître d'Armes and Maître d'Esclime - provided instruction in the application of edged weapons for mortal purposes, until the abolition of duelling, after which they revised their teachings to promote dexterity with facsimile weapons and protective accessories, in the furtherance of sport. Whereas the latter - Fight Director, Swordmaster, and Staged combat instructor - still teach actors, actresses, and students of drama how to avoid injury or disfigurement whilst appearing to maim or kill each other for the purpose of theatrical entertainment.

As a student at the Royal Academy Of Dramatic Art in the mid-1950's, I learned basic foil technique under the auspices of Prof. Ernest Froeschlen. This would have stood me in good stead had I wished to take up competitive fencing, but did not offer the 'brio' necessary for the satisfactory execution of dramatic combat in front of a theatre audience or the lens of a film or TV camera. For a definitive clarification of the art of staged swordplay I can do no better than to offer the following:

"All movements - instead of being as small as possible, as in fencing - must be large but nevertheless correct. Magnified is the word. The routine - and there must be a routine and so well learned it can be performed in the actors' sleep - should contain the most spectacular attacks and parries it is possible to execute while remaining logical to the situation. In other words the engagement should be a fight and not a fencing exhibition. When this occurs, the whole performance will leave an impression of strength, skill, and manly grace.."

This quote was written by the acknowledged creator of the 'film duel', Fred Cavens, who between 1922 and 1962 was responsible for the staging of swordplay for most of the major Hollywood films of the 'swashbuckling' genre.

My mentor in the art was John Greenwood, master of sword to the Royal Shakespeare Company at Stratford-on-Avon and personal coach to Sir Laurence Olivier, from whom I received tuition when we appeared together in the 1960 BBC TV series "An Age Of Kings". A year later, on John's recommendation, I created my first fights for an open air production of "Macbeth" staged in the grounds of Ludlow Castle. No aspiring fight director could have asked for a more auspicious commencement to their career and I'm happy to say that the Ludlow Festival became a regular engagement for me as actor and swordmaster over the next 30 years.

At a rough count I would estimate I have devised swordplay for 80 productions of Shakespeare's works nationwide, appearing as a cast member in many of them. This was not only financially rewarding but also practical, as it meant I could oversee the maintenance of the weapons and allowed me the luxury of being on hand to call extra rehearsals if the fights were dropping below par. Keeping a stagefight safe means not only tailoring it to the actors' capabilities before the play's opening, but working the action regularly throughout the run of the production. For the fact is many of Shakespeare's 'histories' and 'tragedies' - "Hamlet", "Macbeth", "King Lear", "Richard III" and "Henry IV Part 1", to name a few - include a climactic duel in the closing minutes of the play. After two hours plus of 'giving their all' in heavy period costume, elaborate make-up, itchy wigs and beards, the last thing in the world actors desire is a clash of arms with rapier and dagger or broadsword and shield. Given their choice they'd be in the nearest pub knocking back a pint of lager. Or three! So it is not surprising that many of the great theatrical anecdotes involve "stagefight experiences". A number of these pertain to three of our most famous actor knights - Sir John Gielgud, Sir Ralph Richardson, and Sir Laurence Olivier. Sir John, in his memoirs, writes:

"I was never good at stagefighting. Neither was Ralph Richardson. It was inevitable, therefore, that we would at sometime face each other with naked steel. Nightly he would intone - sotto voce, as he thought - 'Bish, bosh, one, two, now you hit me, cockie. Now I hit you. Now we exit. Piece o' cake'. I'm sure the audience could always hear him..."

Other actors have attested to Richardson's habit of talking his way through a staged fight. Jack Gwillim, who played 'MacDuff' to his 'Macbeth' told, me that after delivering the classic line, "Lay on, MacDuff; and damn'd be him that first cries, Hold, enough" with gusto he would immediately start muttering "Now, Jackie, just as we rehearsed it, bish, bosh, one, two...Oh for God's sake take it easy, Gwillim - it's only a matinée after all...". Sir Laurence, however, positively revelled in theatrical 'derring do' (as he was prone to call it) and subscribed to the dictum that:

"There is a traditional paradox in reference to stagefighting - 'the safer the more dangerous'. Most accidents can be attributed to hesitations and other symptoms of not wishing to hurt your opponent. I have always felt very strongly that a stage-fight offered the actor a unique opportunity of winning the audience, as great almost as any scene, speech or action".

Later he would re-think these words:

"Looking back over my career now I see it as a long chapter of almost every imaginable kind of accident, which would seem to say that I am a bad fighter or my rule of 'the safer the more dangerous' is a load of malarkey. Without pausing for reflection I can think of 1 broken ankle, 2 torn cartilages, 2 broken calf muscles, 3 ruptured Achilles tendons, untold slashes, including a full thrust razor-edged sword wound in the breast, water on the elbow, water pretty near everywhere and quite a few pretended injuries while it was really gout..."



Typical Olivier "derring-do" from Hamlet

I have coached a number of 'actor knights' myself. These included Sir Alan Bates (who was a fellow student at RADA) as 'Hamlet', Sir John Neville as 'Macbeth', and Sir Ian McKellen in a stage adaptation of "Saturday Night & Sunday Morning" I gave Sir Michael Gambon tuition in swordplay and horsemanship for a BBC costume drama series entitled "The Borderers". For a musical version of "Wuthering Heights", Sir Cliff Richard was adamant that his performance as 'Heathcliffe' must include the fist fight that leaves his face 'looking like a jelly' (to quote the description in book) and this effect was achieved with the aid of a sponge soaked in theatrical blood which produced gasps and groans from his fans at every performance. A similar device brought about the climax of a German 'mensur' combat I arranged and fought in for a TV production of the classic novel "Man Of Straw", starring Sir Derek Jacobi. This form of duelling, still practised among students in German universities such as Heidelberg, is not mortal but intended to leave at least one of the participants scarred for life. As I was cast as his more experienced opponent my job was to inflict an apparent wound which would be effected by touching Sir Derek lightly on the cheek with the flat of my 'schlager' blade which was smeared with fake blood. This would have been straightforward except for the fact that in the preceding scene he had to drink a pint of lager in one swallow from a large German beerstein. Due to technical difficulties the scene was filmed three times before the director announced he was satisfied with it. As we commenced the duel sequenced I realised the other Derek was, understandably, a little the worse for wear. As we got to the infliction of the 'cut', he was positively reeling. Biding my time, I waited until he swayed away rather than toward me and flicked my blade as rehearsed. To my relief, the 'wound of honour' appeared as planned with no mishap. When I expressed the momentary fear I had of possibly causing him actual injury due to the unforeseen circumstances, my stoic opponent replied, *"Don't worry, old chap, I wouldn't have felt*

a thing but could you direct me to the loo? I'm absolutely bursting..."

Another alcohol related anecdote concerns Robert Newton - 'Pistol' in Olivier's "Henry V", 'Bill Sykes' in David Lean's "Oliver Twist" and considered by many to be the definitive 'Long John Silver' in "Treasure Island". He was an esteemed actor but a notorious old drunk. It is alleged that in his latter years he ill-advisedly took on the mantle 'crook'd back Richard' in a touring theatrical production of "Richard III" and entered to do battle on the field at Bosworth in Act V, Scene IV, so inebriated he could barely utter the famous line, *"A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse..."* with clarity, forcing a disgruntled member of the audience to observe loudly: *"You're pissed"*. At which Newton pulled himself to his full height and retorted, *"Pished? Pished? If you think I'm pished, just wait until the Earl of Richmond makes his entrance..."*

I think, however, that one of the most sobering - no pun intended - remarks I ever heard in the course of a screen fight was in Spain when the American actor Richard Chamberlain, in the role of 'Casanova', was required to fight five 'affairs of honour' with the English actor Frank Finley. The first four were filmed without incident but when it came to the last and most complicated encounter, the punishing schedule - we were working 16 hour days - caught up with Richard and he found himself unable even to perform the 'salute' proceeding the 'clash of arms'. A break was called to enable him to compose himself, during which I whispered to Frank Finley, *"They've been working Richard too hard, and he's having difficulty remembering the moves"*. To which he replied in his flat Yorkshire accent, *"Crumbs. Then you'd better not tell him I've forgotten to put me contact lenses in..."* Whether or not he was joking I've never truly ascertained, but the entire fight, once the cameras were rolling, came off without a hitch.

Although my career as fight director/master of sword brought me artistic and financial rewards, I must confess that the last decade of my working life - as staged combat master to the Birmingham School of Speech & Drama and the Arts Educational Schools in London - allowed me total job satisfaction.

During this period I taught over 500 students skill-at-arms through 'basic', 'intermediate' and 'advanced' levels with theatrical weapons, which included smallsword, rapier & main-gauche, broadsword & buckler, two-handed greatsword, medieval dagger fighting, quarterstaff and unarmed combat. The 'basic' and 'intermediate' tests, performed in front of a qualified examiner, required three fights each involving 30 paired moves - a total of 90 different actions. Whilst the 'advanced' called for 150 moves employing five different weapons. Each couple had to perform their fights with dialogue from a scene of their own choice. Although theatrical classics were preferred, scenes of a comedy nature or famous films or the students' own composition were not discouraged. The object was to entertain and surprise the visiting judge. And I'm proud to say I never had a failure or an injury among the students under my tuition. I wish I could boast the same for myself but the fact is I could give Sir Laurence a run for his money with the list of personal damages received in the performance of my parallel career of film and television stuntman. But that's another set of reminiscences...

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CHRIS'S COGITATIONS

Musings from your Members' Rep.



Happy New Year and welcome to my first column as Members' Rep.

At this year's AGM, I was elected to the role of Members Representative, and I'm pleased to be able to take on this role and the responsibilities that are associated with it. For those of you that don't know me, my name is Stuart Clough and I've been involved in Fencing in one way or another for just over 8 years now. It started with a beginner's course at University and joining my local club during the holidays. After a while, due to problems with my back, I was no longer able to fence regularly, so instead of losing touch with the sport I had come to love, turned my efforts to coaching and took my Level 2 Foil in July 2006. Since then, I've also taken my Level 3 Foil and Level 2 Sabre, as well as attending a Wheelchair Fencing Coaching Course and am currently studying towards my Advanced Foil. I'm Head Coach at two clubs, Coach at another, Chairman and Secretary for all three of them and I also currently run my own business working as a full-time Fencing coach.

This past year, I also volunteered to help out with the on-the-day exams administration tasks at the residential courses. Taking on the role of Members' Rep, is just another way that I hope to help support the Academy. The role entails several responsibilities, the main one of which is to represent the views of the membership at a committee level. You can e-mail, phone or even use good old-fashioned pen and paper, though as my handwriting is probably bad enough to be a doctor's, the reply might be typed :-)

I'm here to represent you, so if you have any suggestions, comments or general thoughts about the Academy and what we do, then please get in touch.

Happy New Year and Happy Fencing.

Stuart Clough, Members' Representative

Isobel Combes is one of the latest coaches to reach the pinnacle of Full Diploma Master. This is her brief biography, in her own words.

When I passed my final diploma exam in October, it was the fulfilment of a very long postponed ambition, one that I had never expected to see fulfilled.

I started fencing in my late teens in the USA with a young fencing master called Ray Finkleman, having taken up the sport after giving up competitive riding. Right from the start, I was fascinated with the process of teaching fencing, especially watching coaches giving individual lessons. It wasn't long before I was helping out teaching beginners and travelling to some of the bigger junior competitions as the coach's general assistant and coffee fetcher! We had got to the point of discussing my staying on at the club as his apprentice with a view to being eventually trained as a fencing master, but life intervened at this point when I was offered a scholarship for graduate study at Cambridge University.

Although I had been brought up in a succession of different countries, I had always wanted to come back to the UK, so this was too good a chance to pass up. I arrived in the country all agog at the idea of fencing in this country, and signed up at the University fencing club almost as soon as I arrived. Sadly, I never clicked with it, nor with the next two clubs I tried, so I drifted away from the sport and the kit found its way to the top of the cupboard for a long time.

Eventually my sons found my old foils and wanted to learn to fence. After much searching I found a fencing club and took them along. I was determined never to fence again, but Allen Goodwin who ran the club was persistent that I should try, and it took only one session with the sword in my hand to remember how much it used to mean to me. A few weeks later he had persuaded me to come to a Denstone course, and despite much misgivings, I loved every moment of it.

Once I had qualified, fencing rapidly began to take over my life and it wasn't long before it had become a full time profession. Once I had passed all of weapons at L3, Philip Bruce offered to help me take epee all the way to diploma. I agreed, and woke up next morning to find he that had emailed me a day by day training schedule for the next three years - from that morning until the day of the exam! By the time we got to the end of that, we had got two diplomas and the Fencing Masters World Championships out of the way, so it made sense just to keep going . . .

The last five years have been a wonderful if exhausting adventure and I look forward to seeing what the future holds. I would love to see my coaching business, Four of Clubs, on a really solid footing, with competitive success and its own premises. It will be a big challenge but the BAF has provided me with fabulous training for it and I am more grateful than I can say for all those who have provided me with such selfless help and encouragement along the way.

Isobel Combes

COURSES

COACHING WORKSHOP

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Contact Dave Jerry, the Course Officer for full details.

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

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.

ADVERTISE HERE FOR FREE!

This page is devoted to items letting our members know of courses and other events. If you have a course, event, or even a club you want to advertise here, contact the Editor, Bob Merry, to discuss this. There is no charge to members and you don't even have to supply any artwork. Simply give Bob Merry the details and he'll see you get a mention on this page.

INSURANCE - INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS

Following enquiries from members, there are two items of interest concerning our insurance.

Firstly, BAF members who have our insurance (not Overseas or Retired members) are covered for fencing activities abroad, in all countries *except* the USA and Canada. This means that, if you are accompanying pupils abroad and give them their usual lessons, you have insurance cover.

Secondly, some Local Authorities may quibble that our usual letter sent out to confirm membership is insufficient to show insurance cover. We now have a certificate of insurance from Sportscover, displaying the terms of our insurance, a copy of which is available on request from Bob Merry. Please note that this does not bear the name of the individual member and you will still need your membership card or our standard letter to prove your entitlement to the benefits of our insurance.

The logo features the word "Duellist" in a gold, cursive script. A gold sword is positioned horizontally behind the text, with its hilt on the left and its blade extending to the right, passing behind the letters.The word "SALE" is written in large, bold, white capital letters. The top and bottom edges of the letters are engulfed in bright orange and yellow flames, giving the impression of the text being on fire.

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