

British Academy of Fencing **ACADEMY NEWS**

February 2014
Issue 74

"Run by coaches for coaches"



WHO IS MISSING?

The photograph on the right shows those members who attended this year's AGM, with one exception; Isobel Bruce Combes was behind the camera, taking the picture.

Of course, there were many other faces missing from the line-up, as this represents only a small fraction of the Academy's membership. For most of the year, the governance of the Academy is entrusted to the committee, but the AGM offers the chance to the membership as a whole to have a say in the running of the BAF. They can hear the reports given by the various officers and members of the committee. Then they can ask questions, raise items for discussion and make suggestions for the future. Those members who are not Masters also have their own meeting, where they can raise matters that concern them (see Worsley's Words, page 10).

Of course, the weekend of the AGM is about much more than the AGM itself. There are opportunities for members to socialise and talk about matters of mutual interest, both at the Dinner in the evening and in the many sessions in the bar. If you feel that you need to get more involved in the running of your Academy, or would like to spend time with some of your fellow coaches, now would be the time to resolve to attend next year's AGM; it will be held on Saturday 3rd January 2015.

After last year's meeting, where there were many adjustments to the Articles to prepare for the Academy becoming a limited company, the meeting this year was more straightforward. All the reports were read and accepted. Because the five members of the committee who are now Directors of the British Academy of Fencing Ltd were starting the second year of a two year term of office, there was no election needed for the posts of President, the two Vice-Presidents, Secretary or Treasurer, whilst the other three members of the committee offered to continue and were elected for a further year.

The Dinner in the evening was well attended and those there were rewarded with a pleasant meal. At its conclusion, presentations were made of various coaching certificates that had been earned during the year. You can see some photographs of the evening on page 7.



Photo: Isobel Bruce Combes

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Designed by fencers everywhere



Made in London

 **Leon Paul**
London

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 Northam
28 Dorset Road
Edgbaston, Birmingham B17 8EN
Tel: 0121 429 9717
Email: prof.pnortham.baf@btinternet.com

Vice-President:

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

Secretary:

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

Treasurer:

Stuart Clough
1 Yew Tree Cottages
Brown Street
Old Newton, Stowmarket IP14 4QB
Tel: 07886 708392
Email: baf@stuartclough.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

Members' Representative:

John Worsley
8 Mosedale Close
Astley
Manchester M29 7JW
Tel: 01942 888 935
Email: worsleyja@aol.com

Proficiency Awards Administrator:

Maitre Donald Walker
4 The Aviaries
Castle Howard
York YO60 7BU
email: maitredcwalker@aol.com

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

tba

International Secretary:

Prof. Philip Bruce

Child Protection Officer, Welfare Officer:

Prof. Louisa Miller

Chairman, Disciplinary Sub-Committee

Prof. Peter Northam

Editor - Academy News, Insurance, Examination Results Coordinator:

Prof. Bob Merry

Membership Secretary:

Stuart Clough

Film & Theatre Representative:

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

USEFUL INFORMATION**ACADEMY
WEB SITE**

**FOR ALL THE LATEST
INFORMATION AND
MERCHANDISING GO TO
THE ACADEMY WEB SITE
AT
WWW.BAF-FENCING.ORG**

**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

**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

DOCUMENTATION

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

Key Teaching Points Foil	} £7.35 (£9.45) each
Key Teaching Points Epée		
Key Teaching Points Sabre		
Key Coaching Points Foil		
Key Coaching Points Epée		
Key Coaching Points Sabre		

Glossary of Terms (including Translation of Fencing Terms).....**£7.35 (£9.45)**

Employment Guidelines.....**£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

** Price of CD-ROM includes lifetime replacement guarantee - only buy once!

A Compendium containing all major Documentation, including the ones above, plus more relating to examinations, is now available. For full details see Issue 64 of Academy News or contact Professor Isobel Bruce Combes (iacombes@btinternet.com)

British Academy of Fencing

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Company No. 8540066
A Company registered in England and Wales
Registered Office:
190 Ashurst Road
Peel Hall
Manchester M22 5AZ

THE PRESIDENT WRITES.....



AGM January 2014 – Warwick

The AGM started with a one minute silence in memory of Professors Geoff Hawksworth and Mike Law, both of whom passed away during the latter part of 2013.

Overall, the AGM went well with all the annual reports being accepted without any issue arising. In addition, the Committee received a vote of thanks for its work during the year

The Committee for the next year was confirmed by the AGM:

<i>President:</i>	Philip Bruce
<i>Vice President:</i>	Peter Northam
<i>Vice President:</i>	Louisa Miller
<i>Secretary:</i>	Bob Merry
<i>Assistant Secretary:</i>	Dave Jerry
<i>Treasurer:</i>	Stuart Clough
<i>Committee Member:</i>	Donald Walker
<i>Members' Representative:</i>	John Worsley

Notable dates during 2014

Committee Meetings:

23 Feb 2014, 13 Apr 2014, 22 Jun 2014, 7 Sep 2014 and 7 Dec 2014

Denstone Residential Courses (for more information, contact Dave Jerry)

24 Mar to 29 Mar 2014

27 Oct to 1 Nov 2014

Weekend Course (for more information, contact Isobel Bruce Combes)

14/15 June 2014 at Stoke-on-Trent

AAI Congress and FMWC Prato, Italy (for more information, contact Andy Wilkinson)

26 Jul to 31 Jul 2014

During AOB I reported to the AGM the work to be undertaken by the SSTT during 2014, namely:

To proof read and edit our revised Child Protection Policy.

To revise, in light of rule changes and so on, our Proficiency Awards Study guides for Bronze Silver and Gold.

To produce a Proficiency Award study guide for Wheelchair fencing.

To conduct a review of the questions for our system of coach education.

During the AGM weekend, a number of our members commented on the increased cost of attending the AGM. At our first Committee meeting, I will be asking the Committee to consider moving the AGM in light of increasing costs. In the meantime if any of our members knows of a suitable hotel, then please drop me and email and we'll investigate

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee for making the AGM run smoothly and efficiently. In particular and on behalf of those who attended, I should like to extend my thanks to Louisa Miller for organising the AGM and Dinner. Finally I should like to thank all those who attended.

Coaching at University Fencing Clubs

Over the last 6 months or so I have been made aware of a number of occasions where our members have had negative experiences of coaching in and or delivering courses for University Fencing Clubs.

Whilst many University clubs treat their coaches well and are a pleasure to work for, there are some who give students a bad name. There appears to be an increasing number of students who do not take their responsibilities as an adult seriously! In addition to their studies, fencing University students appear to be responsible for negotiating with coaches concerning fees and courses etc. with little or no consultation with anyone outside the University Fencing Club. When a problem arises, they refer the coach to the University Sports Centre Manager and/or the Student Union. It is perhaps wise to remember that not all students are accustomed to taking responsibility for their agreements or actions.

For those coaches who are expecting payment for their services, can I suggest the following:

- Keep copies of all correspondence (email etc.), a verbal agreement no longer appears to carry any weight
- Prior to starting any work, establish clearly who will be responsible for settling invoices and address the invoices accordingly or ensure that you receive payment up front before providing any services
- Some Universities operate a purchase order system, that is if a purchase order for your services has not been issued, then your invoice will not be paid

Remember even if the students concerned are 'sure' that the Student Union will pay your invoice, this may not always be the case and it is wise to contact the Student Union yourself before starting any work.

Philip Bruce

DEN OF VICE

Contributions from the Academy's two Vice-Presidents



A coach said to me at a recent competition, "How did that coach pass his exam? If that is the level of pass, why should I bother?" I've heard that comment before about other coaches. Why they should bother to prove to themselves they are good enough to pass. It seems that comments like these come from coaches who work with Regional, National Squads, Teams or individuals, and fencing at national or international level. When I ask why they don't train for Advanced/Diploma exams, it's usually because they haven't got the time. There should always be an element of PD (personal development) in any professional coach's work. Going on courses provides information, qualifications and more importantly networking. Meeting coaches from around the country who you will meet at competitions, developing friendships and exchanging ideas. In some cases, you may eventually be working together.

Those coaches that do pass Academy exams have done the work, put the effort in, paid the course fees, given up the time, placed themselves in front of an exam board, and then passed. It is an extremely stressful procedure which they have gone through. All credit in my view, to those who have succeeded, and, also in my view, *even more credit* to those who failed yet come back again. To me, the test of a good coach is not how they deal with success but how they deal with failure. As they say, "fall down six times, stand up seven".

Another comment said to me recently, from a very experienced fencer, "I've got my BAF Level 1 coaching qualification, I don't need anything more" I was stunned!

How do you respond to that? So many ways to answer, where do you start?

Even now I'm stuck on what to write. So I'll stop and let you all ruminate.

Happy New Year to the Academy, keep the faith, never give up.

*Because of a Coach there is a fencer,
Because of a Coach there is a fencing club,
Because of a Coach there are fencing competitions,
Not because of an administrator, though important,
But because of a Coach*

Peter Northam



'By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.' It was Benjamin Franklin, one of the founding fathers of the United States, who spoke these words and whilst I am certainly no expert in historical matters I think this quote rings true in what we do as fencing coaches. I recently had the pleasure of attending the regional age group competition which is the qualifying event for the British Youth Championships. Prior to the competition, at our club in Kenilworth, we ran a series of additional training sessions to prepare the fencers for the event. The sessions are highly focused and tailored to those fencers who are aiming for competitive success or those who are starting to show an interest and commitment to improving their fencing beyond club level. Our expectation is that if fencers are competing then they will attend such sessions.

If we are expecting this level of preparation of our fencers then we must expect this of ourselves as coaches. However, it never ceases to amaze me how little time some coaches spend preparing for coaching examinations. Turning up to one of the Academy's residential courses (or indeed any coach education course) having not looked at the questions, let alone picked up a sword to practise the exercises, suggests a complete lack of understanding and appreciation of what a course entails and what it means

Continued on page 6...

PROFESSOR MIKE LAW

1940 - 2013

Professor Mike Law died in hospital on December 8th.

Mike was born in 1940 in Wellington, New Zealand and emigrated to England in 1961. In 1964 Mike started in Southend with his first coach, Mrs A Griffiths, and joined the BAF in 1969. Mike was introduced to coaching by Bert Bracewell. In 1980, Mike became a fencing Master. At the time, he paid tribute to Alf Simmons and Ken Pearson, who were instrumental in helping Mike develop as a coach. (Source: BAF publication: Fencing)

Professor David Austin has kindly supplied a few memories of Mike:

My earliest recollections of Mike was when I took over from Professor Pat Pearson at Haberdashers Askes Girls' School on their move from Ealing into the grounds adjoining the boys' school at Elstree in 1974.

I was fortunate in training a group of girls there who became very successful in the Herts County,

In the Eastern Section and National Schools Championships, our then strongest rivals were always the girls at Presdales School under Mike's control. This included one particularly brilliant fencer – now recognised in the Academy – Ann Stewart. She was always a thorn in our side and on the end of her foil. I can only describe Mike as I watched him; a dedicated coach to his pupils, not granting any quarter. As with all good coaches, he had opinions not always shared by his contemporaries, but seemingly they worked. Take Ann as an example. He was a good motivator.

I lost track of him when he moved to Australia. When he returned he came to work for a while at the Hammersmith and West London Adult Evening Institute with me. At that time, I recognised his commitment to gain his Diploma. He had a good work ethic attending all the then BAF Summer Courses and, together with some individual training, he got there without too many complications. After that period, I lost touch with him again and am saddened to learn that the Academy has lost yet another prestigious coach.

My sincere condolences go to his family.

David Austin

DEN OF VICE - from page 5

to develop and train as a fencing coach. We can all come up with a list of reasons (excuses) why we have not put the practice in, with lack of time featuring near the top of that list, but unless you are prepared to put the time and effort into developing your skills then you will struggle to rise above anything better than mediocrity.

By the time you read this article, preparations for the Denstone course in March will be well underway. The course tutors, who work tirelessly during the week, will be making the last minute preparations to timetables, sessions, lesson structures and that's not to mention the accommodation and housekeeping arrangements. This level of preparation has become the norm for Academy courses, well-structured, professional and dedicated to the education and training of fencing coaches. We wouldn't expect anything less.

So for those of you attending the Denstone course in March, I urge you to prepare well, don't sell yourself short and don't wait until you get on the course to realise that the hard work starts now.

Louisa Miller



**SCENES
FROM
THE AGM DINNER**

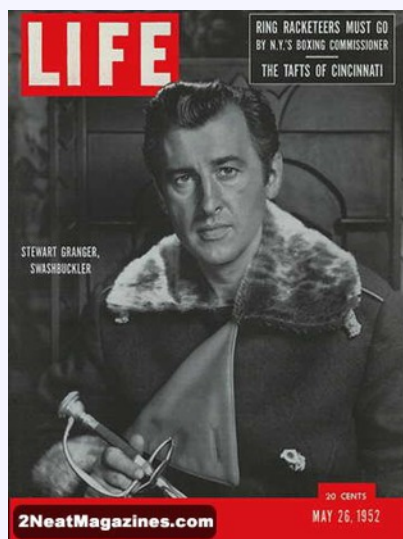


Photos: Bob Merry

SWORDSMEN OF THE SILVER SCREEN - PT 6

By Andy Wilkinson

Stewart Granger
1913 - 1993
“The British Flynn”



To tell Stewart Granger's story as a swordsman of the silver screen allows me the opportunity to tell the story of the Hollywood Studio System, particularly the fencing training the studio afforded their actors and also that of drama schools and academies, for many the first port of call before being 'discovered' by studio talent scouts. However before I do that, let me start this latest article on the great action stalwart of motion pictures, Stewart Granger.

Granger was born James Lablache Stewart in London in 1913, taking his middle name from his great, great grandfather, the actor and opera singer Luigi Lablache, a man blessed with a magnificent bass voice, a skilled performer in the *Commedia dell'Arte* style of performance, one in which Granger would reprise for his own performance as "Scaramouche" in the film of the same title (1952 – MGM).

It could be said that Lablache's signature performance was perhaps that of Leporello in 'Don Giovanni' and with Lablache also becoming Queen Victoria's singing master, you could argue Granger had performing in his blood.

As a young man Granger attended Epsom College as a medical student, however that Lablache gene was far too strong to be ignored and Granger soon abandoned his medical career seeking employment as actor.

As with Errol Flynn (see article in September 2013 Academy News), there are only a handful of true Swashbuckling films Granger made in a career spanning 56 years. Those he did make are note worthy for many reasons, "Scaramouche", "The Prison of Zenda" both made in 1952 by Metro Goldwyn Mayer and a decade later the lesser known "Swordsman of Siena" (1962, Compagnia Cinematografica Montoro) stand out for me. The main theme and soundtrack from "Swordsman of Siena" is in my opinion one of the best Swashbuckling themes ever penned by composer Mario Nascimbene.

Granger was so dedicated to the art of fencing that he worked for months with the fencing master and film sword master Jean Heremans that it is said, "Granger took so many fencing lessons, the practice made him wear out a dozen or so pairs of fencing shoes". On the release of 'Zenda' he adorned the cover of Life Magazine, the title was "Stewart Granger: Swashbuckler". Perhaps the only actor superior to him in fencing at that time was Basil Rathbone, who I have mentioned on numerous occasions in previous articles – more to come on Mr Rathbone in a later edition of Academy News.

The fencing sequences in "Scaramouche" and "The Prison of Zenda" are for any sword master the foundation on which the understanding on how to train, stage and film a dramatic sword fight should be done. They are what all sword masters should aspire to creating – these fights encapsulate what my mentor, Professor Roy Goodall told me:

"Andy, a great scene must have the following: situation, characterisation, dialogue and plenty of action!"

I would highly recommend that any aspiring theatrical fencer out there reading this, buy or rent a copy of "Scaramouche" – which boasts the longest on screen duel in cinematic history - and "The Prisoner of Zenda". That, ladies and gentlemen is how fight choreography is done!



"Prisoner of Zenda" 1952 MGM

A side note – you may recall me mentioning the old maxim "Dying is easy.....comedy is hard" especially when it comes to swordplay, well, if you would like to see a beautifully staged parody of the 'Zenda' fight, where you will actually see a well executed sabre fleche attack, then look no further than the wonderfully funny Blake Edwards' 1965, Warner Bros. film "The Great Race".

With the huge success of "Scaramouche" Stewart Granger was labelled 'The British Flynn', I'm not sure how well the title sat with him, however, as a swordsman Granger rightly deserves the accolade of 'swordsman of the silver screen'.

I am a champion of the old Hollywood studio system, for all of its faults. These pages are perhaps not the place for me to explain myself or my reasoning why – Our editor in chief, Prof. Bob Merry would have apoplexy if I wrote much more (*True! - Ed.*), so briefly then let me say this. The studio system had a structure, departments that worked together and a system whereby actors and actresses would be trained in the skills required of them to offer the audience nothing but the best when seen up on the silver screen. From acting classes, to singing, horse riding lessons, swimming lessons and of course fencing classes.

All of the sword masters I have mentioned in these pages thus far were, at some point in their career, attached to a studio. In house sword masters, what a great idea!

But alas the studio system is no more. An A list actor now demands \$20 million plus before showing up for work and the freelancer teacher/coach lives day by day....don't get me started.

Prior to and post the studio system there has been and I hope will always be the drama school.

Stewart Granger was a student at the famous Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art, based in Kensington, London. Founded in 1926 as a singing school, incorporating full theatrical training into its syllabus by 1932, the Webber Douglas alumni read as a Who's Who of the international entertainment business, including such names as: Angela Lansbury, Donald Sinden, Terrace Stamp, Steven Berkoff, Sir Anthony Sher, Minnie Driver, Sir Julian Fellowes and Hugh Boneville to name just a few.



"Scaramouche" 1952 MGM

Professor Roy Goodall was the fencing master at Webber Douglas when I met him in 1984. I had the great honour and privilege to have assisted Roy there for 5 years as part of my overall training under his tutelage. I'm pleased to

be part of a special fellowship of actors and actresses that passed through Roy's classes. Some are now Knight's of the realm or Hollywood A-listers themselves. Fencing Masters I am sure you will agree are more than just teachers. They impart a philosophy, a code of behaviour and style that follows you like a shadow.

Can you identify who trained a fencer by their manner and style while they have a sword in hand?

I can, the same way I can identify the sword master who trained and choreographed a sequence on film or on the stage. Roy's style of fencing and his philosophy of swordsmanship I carry with great pride everywhere I go – I suspect you do the same of your fencing master.

Until next time -

Take care, be safe, have fun!



"Swordsmen of Stena" 1962

WORSLEY'S WORDS

Musings from your Members' Rep.



Hello and Happy New Year to all the members of the Academy.

Well I'm back for another year as the Members' Representative. Once again the members of the Academy voted me back into the position at the meeting of Maîtres d'Escrime, Provosts and Members and I'm honoured to accept the position again. I'd like to take a moment to say thank you to all those members that made it to the AGM and especially the meeting of Maîtres d'Escrime, Provosts and Members that took place earlier in the morning before the AGM. It was nice to see a few new faces amongst the members and I hope the event lived up to their expectations. It would be nice to see more of our members attending the AGM, as there are so few occasions during the year when we actually meet up as a group to exchange ideas and experiences.

The meeting of Maîtres d'Escrime, Provosts and Members was a relatively peaceful affair, with no complaints to raise and with the majority of the members present happy with the actions of the committee and Academy in general.

Discussions were mainly centred around fencing. One point of interest raised by one member was the standard of some of the children's fencing they had witnessed during the year. They suggested that the teaching of technique and finesse had taken second place to just winning by any means possible, usually based on physical ability rather than fencing ability. This was a point raised in the July 2013 edition of the Academy News by our President, Prof. Phillip Bruce. This generated quite a few opinions on the subject and a lively debate ensued with a number of members arguing that fencing in general, both domestic and international, had become more physical now and less reliant on technical ability over a wide range of actions. Whilst others expressed the opinion that the greater the technical repertoire of the fencer and the more control and finesse they possessed, the greater their chance of competitive success.

Also expressed in the meeting was a request for the Academy, if possible, to arrange for more workshops similar to the "Beyond the Basics" Coaching and Performance course held in June 2012 and the International Performance course held in May 2011. Many of the members present, had attended one or both of the courses and found them invaluable in the development of their own coaching both in terms of structuring lessons and fresh ideas. I will put this forward to the rest of the committee at our next meeting. I would also urge those individuals looking to improve their coaching or looking for fresh ideas for their lessons to attend one of the coach education workshops that some of the Academy's senior members run. Remember the Academy exists to serve the needs of all the members, both master and non-master, fencing coaches both professional and amateur.

So, irrespective of what level of qualification you hold, if you have any thoughts on what the Academy can do for you in 2014, or if you have any ideas or requests for more courses and workshops that you would like to see, please let me know. And please keep those contributions to the Academy News coming in, because apart from the AGM this is one of the few ways that more experienced members sharing their experiences and ideas with the rest of the members. I hope that you all have a happy and successful 2014.

John Worsley, Members' Representative

PREPARATION

By Dave Jerry

“Step, Beat, Balestra”No, not that sort of preparation.

The Academy's Residential Course is a very demanding week. It can be made easier with preparation. All candidates have the questions pertinent to their level and weapon from the moment that they make an application and that should give you some time to get your head around them.

One of the many reasons I hear for not working on the questions before Denstone is that there is no coach available to help. That doesn't matter; make a start and, even if it is not the best solution that you come up with, it is something. The Coach Educators on the course will help you to refine your efforts. No educators are going to say that is rubbish; they will take what you have and help you to improve it. None of us want to reinvent the wheel. It is better to take the one with corners and get the corners off it until it rolls.

A method which worked for me was to take each question and put it on a small card (Credit Card size) and work that lesson at every session that you do. It is only repetition for you; your pupils, they will only see it once. If you do the topics for a week that will only take 15 weeks to have been through the lot. Remember, there is a lot of common ground between the class lessons and the special lessons. The compulsories can be worked into your routine lessons.

The Rule Book is an invaluable source of definitions most fencing actions are defined it comes under the heading “EXPLANATION OF SOME TECHNICAL TERMS COMMONLY USED IN THE JUDGING OF FENCING”

Teaching versus Coaching. Each candidate is given a document “Teaching and Coaching in the BAF”. It helps to get that concept clear before starting the course. I hope that we are now at a point in our evolution where candidates do read the pre-course material, unlike many years ago. It is time to take PREPARATION a step further.

The application for the next course is on the web site and I will be mail shooting again very soon. Look forward to seeing you in March.

THE SOONER YOU APPLY THE SOONER YOU CAN START PREPARATION.

MOTIVATION

During the recent Australian Open, it was reported that the Swiss tennis player, Stanislas Wawrinka, gained motivation from reading a quote from Samuel Beckett's *Worstward Ho*, which he had tattooed on his arm. For those who might find it relevant to their own struggles for success, we repeat it here:

“Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try Again. Fail again. Fail better.”

It seemed to work for Stanislas, as he went on to win his first Open title, by beating Rafael Nadal in four sets in the final!

IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE

Academy News offers members the opportunity to advertise on its pages (see page 12). One person to take advantage of this in recent issues was Richard Burn, who advertised the Cocks Moors Woods Epée Championships. Richard was pleased with the response and contacted us to say:

“You very kindly included an advert for our Epée competition. I'm delighted to let you know that the event went very well. There were 98 junior fencers in the morning, followed by 75 seniors (58 men and 17 women) in the afternoon.”

If you have something you wish to bring to the attention of the membership, whatever it is, please contact the Editor

MORE USEFUL BITS.....**BAF RESIDENTIAL COURSE****Easter Course - 24th March to 29th March 2014****Course to be held at Denstone College, Staffordshire.****Fees: £430 (members) £499 (non-members)****NB - The fee for members has been reduced by £33 compared to previous courses!****Contact Dave Jerry, the Course Officer for full details.****Contact details are on page 3 and further details can be found on our web site.****First Aid Courses**

Are you interested in learning First Aid, or need to renew your qualification? I can provide training in Primary Care (CPR), Secondary Care (First Aid) and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) use. All qualifications are backed by Emergency First Response EMEA Ltd and are recognized by HSE.

For more details and information, contact Stuart Clough (details on page 3) or visit our website <http://efr.stuartclough.co.uk>

Creating Confidence to Caresm**ADVERTISE HERE FOR FREE!**

Academy News is a service to our members and we offer the chance to advertise on its pages, whether it be for an event, a course, your club, or indeed anything. 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.

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.