

British Academy of Fencing **ACADEMY NEWS**

September 2014
Issue 77

"Run by coaches for coaches"



FMWC, PRATO 2014

The Fencing Masters World Championships, under the auspices of the Académie d'Armes Internationale, were held recently in Prato, Italy. Open to those holding a Diploma award recognised by the AAI, Great Britain were represented by a team of Academy members.

As will be seen in the President's column on page 4, the Italian organisation left much to be desired, but that didn't prevent our team from making the most of the experience.

As hosts, the Italians were able to enter two teams in each event and, understandably, dominated the medal table, winning sixteen out of the twenty-two gold medals on offer, as well as ten silvers and six bronzes.

Our team acquitted themselves well and, out of eleven nations that were represented at the Championships, were placed third overall, behind Italy and France, in the Challenge des Nations, based on an aggregate of all the results. Fencing in the Veteran events, Professor Sue Benney won a Silver and two Bronze medals, whilst Maître Mick Johnson gained a bronze in the Veteran Foil. Maître Peter Wright was unlucky to finish just outside the medals in the Senior Sabre event.

Our President, Professor Philip Bruce, was there as the head of delegation and represented the Academy at the AAI Congress. The team was captained by Andy Wilkinson and you can read his report, in his own inimitable style, on page 7, whilst we have a small selection of photographs on page 9. The team were also accompanied by a number of supporters, who decided to go to this pleasant part of Italy at their own expense and add vocal support to the team's efforts.

Well done to all our team for representing the country and the Academy so well.



Representing Great Britain and the Academy

Photo: Isobel Bruce Combes

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Academy News is edited by Bob Merry, 6 Birkdale Close, Bramhall, Stockport, Cheshire SK7 2LN.

Tel: 0161 440 9613 or 07836 764026. Email: bobmerrybaf@aol.com.

Articles and other material are welcome and should be sent to the Editor

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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:**

Prof. Tom Etchells
24 Honeysuckle Drive
Stalybridge
Cheshire SK15 2PS
0161 330 3262
email: T_ETCHELLS@sky.com

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

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The British Academy of Fencing Ltd
Company No. 8540066
A Company registered in England and Wales
Registered Office:
190 Ashurst Road
Peel Hall
Manchester M22 5AZ

THE PRESIDENT WRITES.....



AAI Fencing Masters World Championships 2014, Prato, Italy.

It started off so well. We touched down at Florence airport under a blazing sun to be met with Prosecco and flowers by representatives of the Italian Federation, who then whisked us off to Prato in a fleet of classic cars, to a five star hotel in the ancient walled city. There, we were wine and dined by our hosts after a spectacular opening ceremony. The next day, our GB team swept the medal board leaving the astonished Italian team trembling in their wake.

Then I woke up to find we were still circling Florence airport, 80 minutes late and unable to land because of the pouring rain . . .

My memories of the subsequent days are very much a mixed bag. We had great hopes of the Fencing Masters World Championships in Prato, having been promised such a glorious event two years ago at the AAI Congress in Portugal. The event was to be a showcase of Italian competition with a spectacular setting, world class facilities and FIE referees every day. Sadly, it is hard to feel that the event in any way lived up to these promises.

We arrived at the venue to find it was a shabby, graffiti covered school off a main road. I have to say the facilities were little better than third world, with appalling toilets, no running water, no air conditioning and no provision whatsoever for the comfort of the competitors and their supporters. More seriously, the British and German delegations had, almost immediately, to enter into battle with the organisers over the inadequate and dangerous provision of pistes which were too narrow for safety and contravened FIE guidelines. This unprofessional conduct of the Championships and disregard for rules and safety specific to our sport continued throughout the week. Had there been a need to deal with an incident, there was no Directoire Technique, nor indeed was there any evidence of any medical or paramedical support, or facilities. The heads of both the German and British delegations had to step in more than once to resolve heated disputes which arose as a result of a lack of DT and a sufficient number of referees. Not to speak of the fact that it was impossible to be anywhere at the right time due to the lack of any written timetable, or, indeed, any consistent agreement as to when events would take place. The most serious example of this was the AAI Congress itself when, due to a complete lack of communication and courtesy on the part of the organisers, the meeting did not start until two hours after the allotted time, causing at least one delegate to have to leave before it started and thereby to be deprived of their right to vote. The repercussions of this continue and the AAI will need to call an Emergency General Meeting in the next few months to resolve this.

Having got all that out of the way, I'm relieved to turn back to the positives. It has to be said, that this terrible impression of Italian fencing can all be pinned onto a very small handful of people. As for the rest of those involved, they could not have been friendlier or more welcoming, including Faustino Colombo, the local fencing master, whose venue this was, and who seemed sincerely concerned that we should enjoy our visit, the young people who spent the week running a snack stall to compensate for the inadequacies of the venue, the horde of youngsters helping throughout the week, and the driver who ferried us back and forth so enthusiastically. I would like to thank them on behalf of the BAF for the warm welcome they gave us all.

The brightest part of the week was the BAF team I had the privilege of leading as head of delegation. Of all the FMWCs I have attended, this must have been, in that respect, one of the most pleasurable from my point of view, both in the competition and at the many bars and restaurants afterwards. It was a great pleasure to see the enthusiasm and good humour with which all our team approached the competition, giving it their all with such a sense of joy in the sport. Their company and friendship made it all worthwhile. It was especially pleasing to see the sense of mutual support – every member of the team attended on every day to support their colleagues even when they themselves were not due to fence. I thank them all for making what could have been a very disappointing experience a very positive memory.

I would like to conclude with some favourite quotes of the week:

"You'll find the climate is very similar" (Scott, to the Italian taxi driver who said he would like to visit Scotland)

"Tell Isobel she is missing some excellent bums! The French team are getting changed in the hallway!" (Angela)

"I have to find a nun" (Andy W.)

"YES please! Now? Where? Out of my way guys!!!" (. . . or words to that effect from Andrew Norris on being asked to referee the Italian women's épée)

"There was this headmistress at a girls' school . . ." (Dennis – for all who are familiar with his famous Fokker joke)

"Scott, please friend me on Facebook" (from what I could see, every Italian who met him!)

Oh, it was raining when we left, too . . .

DEN OF VICE

Contributions from the Academy's two Vice-Presidents



It was a busy night at the club, lots of fencers, all the coaches working hard, electric fighting with queues to get on. I went for a break and popped next door to watch a Judo coach with his class. I was intrigued with the exercise he was giving them. He got one of his class to stand against the wall and then put six others in a line in front of him. The lad against the wall then had to fight each one, without a break, non-stop.

It was very tough. The point of the exercise was to develop stamina. Great I thought, I can do that with some of my fencers. I adapted the exercise slightly, used only those fencers who I considered it would benefit (not beginners), and it went down a bomb!

The point I am making is that we as coaches can learn from other sports. I was privileged to work with the Midland School of Sport many years ago; a week's residential course, at a university, involving five other sports. Joint staff meetings were interesting, staff coffee breaks were more interesting and evenings at the canteen/bar hilarious. When you get a load of coaches together, jokes and anecdotes are bouncing all over the place. I was asked by a tennis coach what fencing was like,

"Just like tennis," I said, "but we can make the ball (weapon point) not only go forward but also backward and around the bat several times and then hit."

All sports have most of the following in common; technique, timing, distance, speeds, and accuracy (you can probably think of others). Watching other sports in training can be an enlightening experience and a useful source of ideas.

But you have to be careful; enthusiasm over experience can be a deadly combination.

Always use small steps or progressions, monitor the effects on your fencers, adjust as necessary, bin it if not working.

I am writing this in the first week of August and already I am looking at the fencing calendar and working out which competitions I have to go to. I don't know about you, but because of this job of full-time coaching, my mind seems always to be thinking of fencing. Into my head pop competitions, individual fencers, coaches, schools, future projects, weapon exercises and routines, the list goes on. On reflection, I'm happy with that.

By nature I am an optimist and look forward to the next day; see you all on the fencing circuit!

Prof Peter Northam, Vice President.



Sports coach UK conducted a research project to examine the reasons why some female coaches decide to become qualified while others do not. The report identified a background in which female coaches come up against a number of barriers to accessing coaching qualifications. The barriers identified in the report are:

- Gender issues in wider society
- Negative perceptions within sports
- Personality
- Confidence
- Practical barriers – time, cost and location
- Coaching qualifications

(Sports coach UK, 2013)

It should be noted that the report found these barriers to exist at the individual level, the wider sport level and society levels. This presents quite a broad outlook and therefore is open to generalisation.

However, as a result of the report, sports coach UK has made a series of recommendations, which they hope will be taken forward by National Governing Bodies of Sport. The recommendations are summarised below:

- Providers of coach education increase the number of female coaches undertaking coaching qualification courses alongside male coaches (when administering qualifications).
- Make coaching qualifications more accessible by delivering courses in alternative formats, including in smaller blocks of learning and in the evenings.
- Provide female coaches with more information prior to starting a qualification. This will include details of what the qualification involves, what is required of them and who is likely to be there.
- Provide mentoring systems for female coaches undertaking coaching qualifications.
- Develop role models to encourage more women to become qualified coaches.
- Review the extent to which coach education matches the learning styles of women.

(Sports coach UK, 2013)

Continued on page 6.....

WORSLEY'S WORDS

Musings from your Members' Rep.



I usually leave mentioning the Brian Pitman Award until the next issue of the Academy News. But I thought this time I'd give people a little more time to think of possible candidates. In previous years, there have been very few names put forward as candidates, possibly because there may not be enough time to think about a worthy recipient. As a reminder, below is an outline of the qualifying conditions for the award.

The Brian Pitman Memorial Award is awarded at the discretion of the committee to a member of the Academy who has shown particular skill or dedication to the promotion and/or the development of fencing for young people under the age of 18, with a particular emphasis on non-performance/participation fencing. Anyone who coaches children or young people especially in the following areas would be strong contenders for the award.

- Young people with learning difficulties.
- Physically handicapped young people.
- Young people from deprived areas.
- Work in state schools.
- Work with voluntary organisations.

Although it mentions non-performance and participation fencing in particular, any coach involved in competitive fencing especially in any of the above areas would still be considered as a candidate. Please take some time to think of a suitable candidate, there will be few of them out there, but most are too modest to put themselves forward as candidates, so help them out and do it for them. Remember the award is open to both professional and amateur coaches alike, so don't think that you are excluded just because you coach for a living. Also the nominations don't have to come from other academy members; the parents of fencers and fencers themselves can nominate their coaches for the award. All nomination can be sent to any member of the committee before the end of November, please include the name of the candidate and a brief outline of why they qualify for the award.

Well, that all for this issue, please take some time to think about nominations, otherwise another year will pass without the award being presented.

If you have any comments on the above or would like any more information then please get in touch.

John Worsley

Member's Representative. Email: worsleyja@aol.com or mobile: 07857 625 958

....Den of Vice - from page 5

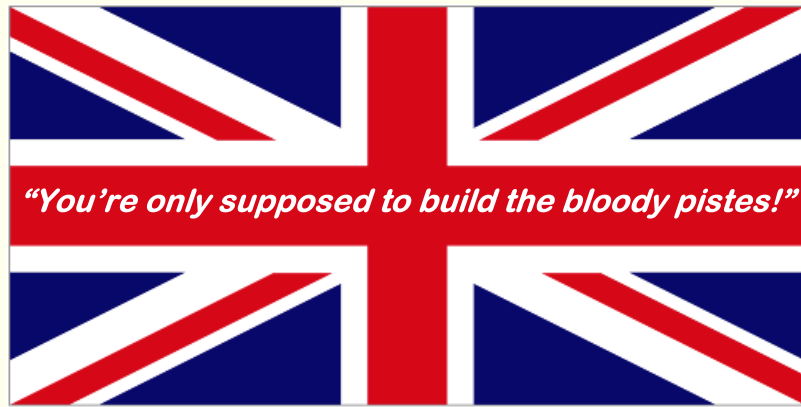
While this report was not sport specific (fencing was not one of the sports included in the research data), it raises some salient points worthy of consideration. How closely should coaches and coach educators pay attention to reports of this nature? Do the barriers identified above strike a chord with fencing coaches? Are the recommendations worthy of consideration in fencing? The people best positioned to answer these questions are without a doubt the female coaches.

The Academy is committed to developing the practical skills of the fencing coach to the highest possible degree. The Academy is committed to supporting and encouraging coaches and Masters in the continual development of their own skills and the modernisation of the sport. Both of these statements are taken directly from the Academy website (<http://www.baf-fencing.com/about-us.html>) and relate to all fencing coaches. I would be naive to suggest that the barriers listed above do not affect female fencing coaches and would welcome discussion around whether the Academy should be acting on the findings published in this report or indeed doing its own research into the situation with respect to female coaches in fencing. As always, we openly welcome any comments, suggestions, thoughts or questions based on this article.

Prof. Louisa Miller, Vice President

References

Research team at sports coach UK (2013) 'Women and Qualifications Research' (Online article). Available at: <http://sportscoachuk.org/sites/default/files/scUK-W&Q-finalreport.pdf> Accessed August 2014
<http://www.wsff.org.uk/> - Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation
<http://sportscoachuk.org/> - a UK based not-for-profit organisation that supports UK partners to recruit, develop and retain sports coaches to achieve their participation and performance goals



THE ITALIAN JOB

With my apologies to Sir Michael Caine and Sir Noel Coward

It's like this Mr Bridger; you see the gang and I went over to Italy for a reunion type thing. You know with other gangs from around the world.

Where? Prato.... that's right Mr Bridger home of the Sacred Girdle...

Mild? You could say that, Mr Bridger; yes it was a touch on the warm side.

No, we didn't bring the Minis on this job, wish we did Mr Bridger!

Yes, transport was a problem. There was one seven seat people carrier supplied by the organisers for the entire fencing competition – the driver, and I use the term loosely here, was obviously a big fan of the chariot race scene in "Ben Hur".

The indicator in his van seemed to be an optional extra he hadn't asked for; I doubt he'd have used it at all if the horn wasn't on the end of it. Enough to say each member of the gang got excellent leg stretching warm ups on the way to the venue, reaching out for brakes that were not there!

On arrival at the sports hall, we found eight pistes – unfortunately none of them was set up for a world championship competition. All were 1 metre wide and only 10 metres long. Needless to say Philip 'The Enforcer' Bruce was not best pleased. Neither were the other gang leaders attending. With much arm waving from the organisers, the pistes were rebuilt to a world championship standard.

Anyway, you know the gang I think, we were all on form, tooled up and ready to go.

Like I said, we had Philip 'The Enforcer' Bruce in charge

Mick 'The Ref Charmer' Johnson working two weapons, just in case.

Sue 'The Podium Queen' Benney kept the ladies worried as she challenged all comers in three weapons.

Dennis 'The Maestro' Hunt was our secret weapon, naturally. He simply charmed the other gangs and demonstrated how sabre fencing should be executed. There was one particular hit on a fencer, 30 years his junior that was so masterful the entire salle erupted with applause and cheered! Mr Bridger, you should have been there; it was brilliant to see.

Peter 'Mr. Lightning' Wright was our man in the senior Sabre. You only know you've been hit by Peter after the event. Peter moves so fast, all you see is a blur as he comes forward and his blade as it comes back. The French fencer and medallist at this Championship, Nicolas Coruble, after Peter won a bout 5 – 0 came on piste, knelt down and, using his own towel, polished Peter's shoes in admiration of his skills in front of the entire salle!

Scott 'The Philadelphia Kid' McMenemy, Andrew 'The Pizza King' Norris and Tony 'Dublin Rules' Klenczar were our heavy mob épée team, just in case it all turned nasty.

Yes we did, Mr Bridger, the British gang supported their team mates at every match; there was a real team spirit. I was very proud of all of them.

‘The Podium Queen’ got the ball rolling with a bronze on day one. By the end of the competition Sue bagged another bronze and a silver medal, a true tour de force.

‘The Ref Charmer’ although an epeeist by trade decided to have a bash at foil too and won a brilliant bronze.

Why ‘Ref Charmer’, Mr Bridger? Let’s just say there was this one lady Italian referee who was a delightful distraction; an excellent referee too. Our senior épée lads didn’t get a look in as Mick ‘The Charmer’ Johnson worked his magic and managed to get her to referee all of his matches!

No, Mr Bridger, he never told us his secret either.

Then it was the turn of the lads!

There were huge entries in their event, remember the host gang could enter two teams per event. The Italian gang was headed up by Luigi Mazzone.

That’s right, Mr Bridger, Mazzone the former World Champion. It was a master class to watch him compete, even so, ‘The Philadelphia Kid’ did get three hits on him!

The lads did us proud – it was the hottest day of the competition, no air conditioning, no breeze, the humidity was very high and they fenced all day in the biggest event. Between bouts they were cheering on and encouraging their team mates. All of us did. It made me proud to be British, Mr. Bridger.

There is another story to this championship, which is a must read on our President’s page, but this is the story, well the stuff we can put in print anyway, of ‘The Podium Queen’, ‘The Ref Charmer’, ‘Mr. Lightning’, ‘The Pizza King’, ‘Dublin Rules’, ‘Maestro’, ‘The Philadelphia Kid’ and ‘The Enforcer’. I’m sure if you would like to know more, especially how they got their new handle names; the bar at the AGM is where you will find them to ask. They all deserve a round or two on us, so why not keep an eye out for them!!

As I close this report, Mr Bridger, I want to add my thanks and appreciation, not only to the team, who in my book are the best bunch of people you could possibly choose to spend a week with, but also to the ‘Self Preservation Society’ of Isobel Bruce Combes, Angela Goodall, June Klenczar and Marcia Stretch who, at their own expense, came and cheered the loudest, longest and hardest for our gang of fencers.

The FMWC came to a close with an overwhelming sense, from us all, of not wanting to hear the Italian national anthem again for a long while.

I know you will join me in saluting our team, our colleagues and their supporters for Keeping Calm and Carrying On and making us proud once again to be part of The British Academy of Fencing.

My name is Andy ‘The Boss’ Wilkinson, and not many people know that.



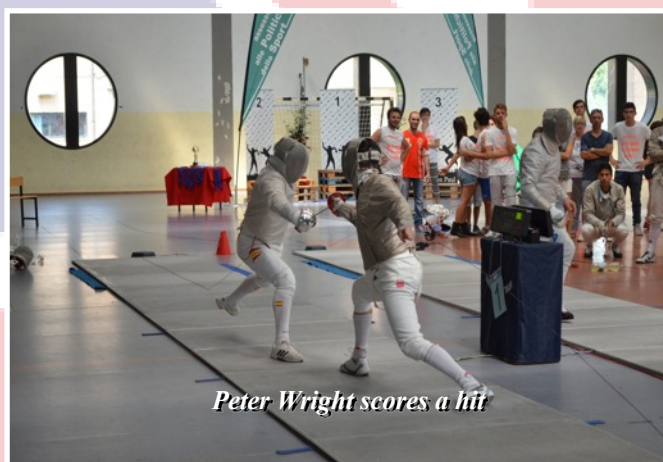
FMWC, Prato 2014



Sue Benney on the podium for another medal



Mick Johnson claims a bronze



Peter Wright scores a hit



Supporters watch Sue in action



Tony Klenczar (left) during the épée



Presidents both - Mike Bunke (AAT) with Philip Bruce enjoying the local produce



Friendly rivalry from our épée team



"After you, Andy" - "No, after you, Scott"

Letters

From Derek Evered

On reading the previous Academy News, I counted eight different colours printed. There may be more. Perhaps our editorial colleagues are unaware that about 10% of men in the United Kingdom are colour blind. I am colour blind (blue-green) and so had difficulty reading our President's article. What is wrong with black printing on white paper?

One of our team members for the Fencing Masters World Championships has his surname misspelled therein. I hope he does not come to the piste to be told (in Italian) that he is not the competitor named.

Derek Evered

Thank you, Derek, for your letter. After my plea in the July issue for more contributions from the readership, this, and the article on page 11 by Liz Williams, were the only ones I received - see Comment below.

I take your point about the use of colour and we have made changes in the past when people have reported difficulty, due to their colour blindness. In this issue, the saturation of the green background to the President's page has been reduced, which I hope will help. Academy News is a magazine rather than a newspaper and we use colour to try to make it more visually attractive. Whilst making it more interesting for our members, it could also help, however slightly, in attracting new members. If copies are left where there are potential members around, it could encourage them to have a look at it and find out more about the Academy. There is also some use of colour-coding to indicate the type of article - our regular contributors each have their own background colour, for example.

I can assure you that no-one on our team in Prato was inconvenienced by a small error in spelling in the Team Captain's report in the previous issue, but his attention has been drawn to it and Andy apologises for the error. I would add my apologies to that, for failing to spot it during proof-reading. But surely, Derek, the referee on the piste at the FMWC should have been speaking French, not Italian!

But thank you again for your interest. We would welcome any more contributions on this topic, or, indeed, any other. Bob Merry, Editor.

IMPORTANT - NEW EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

The SSTT has just completed the 2014 update of BAF examination questions at all levels. The new questions, (v.6.0) are now available on disk from the Course Officer.

The questions come into effect for all BAF examinations as of August 1st 2014. Previous copies should be destroyed and those members entitled to free updates should contact the Course Officer for replacement disks.

The new questions will be sent to those who have registered to attend our next Denstone Course.

Comment

Every few months, I sit at my computer, ready to prepare another edition of Academy News. The first impression I get is one of acres of blank pages waiting to be filled. Of course, we have our regular contributors, but this will only fill three pages at most. Three more I can fill with advertising and information, but that still leaves half of each edition waiting for material.

I was chatting about this in the bar the other evening, with some of my club colleagues and fellow BAF coaches. One of them told me about a ploy used in his university magazine. When faced with a piece of blank page, they would run a photo of a gentleman called Phil Space. I will try to find his picture on the internet, but, if you don't wish to keep seeing him, please consider making your own contribution. Follow the example of Liz Williams in this issue and share some of your experiences with the membership. Please, if only to preserve the anonymity of Phil Space. Thank you. Bob Merry, Editor.

SPIRIT OF RESISTANCE

Musings on a Summer Camp

By Liz Williams

I have just returned from a week long summer camp with 8-16 yr olds and, tiring as it was, I will run them as long as I can, as they re-invigorate my love for fencing, teaching and life in general.

This year we ran the disciplines of Japanese swords alongside fencing and historical fencing/stage combat.

It may be your vision of hell, to see a group of hormonal teenagers given all sorts of swords but I would say look again...there is the future.



The passion, unchecked inquisitiveness and inventiveness that we saw were both unnerving and challenging, as well as inspiring. I won't bore you with the physical challenges that some of these children faced to participate, save to say they rose to those challenges and smashed them. It made my recent charity challenge to trek up Snowdon seem a little tame, but then each person's challenge is for them alone and we must remember that.

The camp was a great opportunity to inform and in some cases re-educate (Karate Sensei - 1 : Assassins' Creed - 0). It was also the opportunity to show that there are similarities in Naval Cutlass Drill and Japanese Sword moves, Karate blocks and Sabre parries. In this world, the more we have in common must surely be good.

It definitely gave us, the coaches, the chance to see our own sport in a different way. Children have a certain way of asking questions that I don't think would get much time at Denstone, but nevertheless is valid and essential if we want them to continue to want to fence. I am a firm believer that you cannot blindly follow anything, whether that be sport, religion or politics, just because it has always been done that way. There must be the opportunity and a supportive environment to ask questions, and challenge.

After the 2012 Olympics I remember many comments on the Koreans' style of fencing and how unorthodox it was. I have heard tales of many of the past great masters of the BAF breaking with tradition, teaching in their own way and having the maverick spirit to try new approaches. Dare I even suggest that when I watch James Davis I do not see an ordinary fencer but someone whose approach is entirely suited to him and him alone.



I guess what I want to say is that if we want to produce run-of-the-mill fencers then we can carry on doing what has always been done and they will be good, but if we want to produce exceptional fencers that will stand out in the future then they must be given the room to question, find their own way and keep the passion that was evident when they walked through the door to us. We must guide and answer, but how they put it all together on the piste will be the inner warrior they have always been.

Photos by Liz Williams

MORE USEFUL BITS.....

BAF RESIDENTIAL COURSE

Autumn Course - 27th October to 1st November 2014

Course to be held at Denstone College, Staffordshire.

Fees: £430 (members) £499 (non-members)

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



COCKS MOORS WOODS ÉPÉE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Saturday 15th November 2014

Two competitions in one day...

Morning: Juniors (age groups) Afternoon: Seniors Open

Entry Fees

AM or PM £17.00

AM & PM £25.00

U15s may enter Junior and Senior events. Late entry plus £5.

Venue:

Cocks Moors Woods
Leisure Centre
Alcester Road South
Kings Heath
Birmingham B14 6ER

Closing date for entries: 11th Nov 2014

Format: One round of poules. Everyone promoted to direct elimination.

Visit website for full details, to enter online or download an entry form.

Contact: Richard Burn - m: 07967 267663 e: eepee@cmwfc.org.uk

www.cmwfc.org.uk/eepee

Leisure Centre

Facilities:

Cafe and Bar

Swimming Pool

Fitness Centre

Large Free Car Park

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.