

British Academy of Fencing **ACADEMY NEWS**

November 2014
Issue 78

"Run by coaches for coaches"



THE INTERNATIONAL SET

Although its status as an official Académie d'Armes Internationale course was not really promoted, the Autumn Course nevertheless attracted a strong contingent from overseas.

Some were returning, having attended our courses in the past; Henk Uijting and Conrad Makosz, both from the Netherlands, and Cindy Rudin from Sweden. Henk was here in 2011 and joked that it took him three years to pluck up the courage and recover the energy to have another go.

A newcomer to the course was Michael Garrison, from Wisconsin, USA. The course had been recommended to him by a senior coach in the USFCA. He had come to the course seeking "a different perspective" and was impressed by our systematic approach and emphasis on correct terminology.

Rene Kopiec had endured a 23 hour flight from Sydney, Australia, to attend the course. He had been looking for an épée course and had found ours through an internet search. He had been very impressed by all the help he had received from our Course Officer, Dave Jerry, and had signed up for the course. He admitted to being a little overwhelmed at first, but when we spoke to him half-way through the course, he said that he had already gained enough to have made the long journey worthwhile.

Rene's opinion's were backed up by another long distance traveller, Tan Ze Han, from Singapore. Han had heard about the course from colleagues, who had been on previous courses. One of the main reasons for selecting our course was that it is conducted in English; other AAI courses are usually in German or French.

Another Australian on the course was Andrew Robinson, originally from Canberra. Andrew is so keen to follow the BAF system that he has based himself in the UK while he studies. Asked for his opinion of the course, he immediately came back with one word; "Fantastic!"

Conrad had persuaded one of his pupils, Jessica de Bel, a Belgian living in the Netherlands, to come on the course. Jessica was mainly interested in Stage Combat, but Conrad had suggested that, to make it more realistic, she also needed to understand fencing better, so she was here to study for Levels 1 and 2 Sabre.

We hope that all our overseas guests appreciated the course and we look forward to welcoming them, and many more like them, in the future.



Rene, Henk, Andrew, Han, Jessica, Conrad, Michael and Cindy (l to r)

Photo: Bob Merry

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| Contributions by January 10th, please. | |

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Leon Paul London

Event dates for the Leon Paul London Fencing centre



November

15th & 16th - Leon Paul League Event 1
22nd - Leon Paul BSC Cadet Sabre
29th - 2nd Leon Paul Men's Epee Open
30th - British Open Team Epee

December

6th - Leon Paul BSC Girls' Cadet Foil
7th - 2nd Leon Paul Women's Epee Open

January

10th & 11th - London LPJS Foil
17th & 18th - Leon Paul League Event 2

February

21st - London LPJS Epee
22nd - London LPJS Sabre

March

7th - 2nd Leon Paul Women's Foil Open
8th - British U23 Sabre Championships
14th & 15th - British U23 Epee Championships
21st & 22nd - British U23 Foil Championships
28th - 2nd British Sabre Open
29th - 2nd British Team Sabre Open

April

25th & 26th - Cole Cup

May

9th & 10th - Senior Epee Open
16th & 17th - Leon Paul League Event 3
30th - Leon Paul Cadet Epee Open

August

1st & 2nd - LPJS International Foil
3rd - 7th - Youth Epee & Sabre Summer Camp
8th - LPJS International Epee
9th - LPJS International Sabre



Dates correct at time of printing please confirm by visiting www.leonpaulfencingcentre.com



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**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

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

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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 | | |

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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)

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THE PRESIDENT WRITES.....



Denstone – BAF Residential Course

By the time this edition of the Academy News has been delivered, another course will have been consigned to the history books. It seems like only yesterday that we held our first course at Denstone, though it is now 14 years ago. I am of the opinion that those attending our residential courses have come to expect significantly more than those of us who attended courses at Lilleshall, Loughborough and Cheltenham. It's no longer enough for tutors to simply turn up and deliver material. The courses are now designed around, and supported by, a considerable amount of dedicated study material and ancillary information. The expectations of the candidates are in this day and age considerably higher than they once were.

I started my coaching career almost by accident when I signed up for the Lilleshall (BFA formerly AFA) residential course in my late teens under the mistaken impression that it was a performance course! Leon soon put me right on that and typically, rather than dissuade me, he simply insisted that I should be properly prepared. As the youngest on the course, I came in for more than my share of raised eyebrows and disapproval from other candidates. This continued almost with each successive course until I attended a BAF course held in Cheltenham where some of the candidates decided it was time to teach me, the 'mere amateur', a lesson, by setting up an informal sabre competition with a view to putting me in my place. You can judge for yourself whether that succeeded!

On the other hand, there are many happy memories of those days, including

(Lilleshall) Mervin Dinsdale and Ken Pearson having me practising my class lessons by addressing the radiators, as I was a little shy in those days!

- (Lilleshall) a prank which, almost backfired, when the candidates dressed up a suit of armour in a bra and knickers borrowed (well taken/stolen) from the windowsills.
- The general manager of Lilleshall coming into the gym and switching off the lights while we were still practising late at night (it was only 10:30).
- (Loughborough) being persuaded into playing netball against what I was told was a local beginners team . . . they were in the England Ladies' Team
- (Almost every course) all the inevitable late night drinking sessions and putting the fencing world to rights discussions/arguments (nothing changes there!)

Many years later, and as a newly qualified Master, I found myself returning to the coaching courses (Star Centre- Cheltenham), but this time as a member of staff. I don't remember my contribution to the course being particularly noteworthy. Indeed my personal recollection is that my performance was poor. I was just showing off, "look at how clever I am", pathetic really . . .

A little over a decade later came my first course with Leon, Tom, Andrew and Norman Golding and I remember it as if it were yesterday. Looking around the salle, I was appalled at the poor quality and lack of consistency of the study guide material available for the candidates. Everywhere I looked, people were surrounded with a motley collection of notes and fencing textbooks (which had seen better days), many of which contradicted each other and the rare moments of tension on today's Denstone courses are nothing compared to the bust-ups and tantrums that would flare up in those days over interpretation, and disagreements about how to define strokes or perform actions!

During that first course, Leon, Tom, Andrew and I agreed the only way forward was to write dedicated study guide material, the first of which was a 'Glossary of Terminology'. Unfortunately none of us realised the enormity of the task. In the end, a project that perhaps should have taken a year snowballed into ten years, the culmination of which is now the Compendium (a BAF publication which seems to be in high demand around the world). I believe this is the only publication, which is dedicated to fencing strokes and coach education. One of the many things which came out of that first course was the need for continuity and consistency and the definite need for the staff to be singing from the same song sheet irrespective of the level and the weapon being taught. I have been criticised over most of the 14 years for having such a relatively small pool of educators (though the more astute will know I have used almost all the Academy's Masters) and for using people over and over again. However, what is not always appreciated is that we have produced a model that candidates (the customer) like and come back for over and over again. It is no longer a course where an educator can turn up and 'wing it'. Essentially, tutors now need to be trained to deliver the course candidates expect (and believe me, candidates complain bitterly if they don't get it) and it is the training which involves a commitment to being repeatedly available for courses, which is simply not possible for many of today's masters.

In today's market, a bad course, or simply getting it wrong once, could destroy our customer base beyond repair and that's a risk we can't afford to take. Much as I would like to get more people involved as educators, some are simply opposed to our system and some have simply too much baggage. If candidates do not have confidence in the staff, then they simply vote with their feet. It's as simple as that. This issue is made even more serious by a development, which I never for a moment anticipated – the number of candidates who attend our courses from abroad. . There is now rarely a course, which does not include at least one foreign candidate. When people have made investments sometimes running to over a thousand pounds in coming to one of our courses, I cannot afford to take the risk of putting their success in the hands of staff I do not believe to be adequately prepared for the task.

So what have been the highs and lows of the Denstone courses? I'll let you decide: telling a friend they failed the exam; telling a colleague they passed, when they didn't expect to; introducing a new master to the course at the end of the week; the occasion on which I had the task of supervising the womens' shower time, and that unforgettable moment of being in the bowels of the college, ankle deep in water, looking for the stop tap.

Are our courses successful? I would say yes, but then I'm biased. Judge for yourselves. Tom Etchells (then the Course Officer) and I decided the course should never cost the Academy a penny and at the same time they shouldn't fleece those attending, or become a money making exercise. I am pleased to say this has been the case from the beginning to the present day. All our courses are organised without any financial assistance and have, in recent years, taken place in difficult economic times. We have a considerable amount of repeat customers; every course is attended by new candidates and we continue to attract candidates from all over the world. 14 years ago, Leon Hill, Tom Etchells, Andrew Vincent and I created a simple business model for a residential course, which in my opinion continues to evolve and grow in strength. The pass rate on our courses is now an average of 85% compared to 27% on courses held a couple of decades ago. The fact is the BAF runs two courses per year and has done so for over 3 decades is testament today of its continuing success.

Whilst I am associated with the course I will always expect both the staff and the candidates to strive for the highest standards. After all I had the privilege and honour of seeing courses led by Leon Hill and both the late Bob Anderson and Ken Pearson. All of these strived for clarity of presentation and set extraordinary high standards for themselves, something of which I am very conscious and continue to strive for. My only hope is that they would be pleased and impressed with what the course has become.

Over the many years I have seen members of staff giving their all, sometimes above and beyond the call of duty. They've won and lost arguments, enjoyed one or two bevvies too many, stayed up until the small hours of the morning arguing and discussing fencing and trying to make improvements, and still with each passing year, the dedicated ones with something to give keep coming back!

This year's course was attended by 22 candidates (13 BAF members, 9 non BAF members - 15 UK residents, 7 non UK residents). On behalf of the Staff and our Committee I would like to thank each and every one of them for their hard work and dedication. I would also like to congratulate all those who were successful in passing our examinations. Finally I should like to offer my sincere thanks and appreciation to the staff and our examiners for their help and support.

Philip Bruce, President

A COLLEAGUE ENTERTAINS



Yuichi Ito attended a number of BAF Courses and, in 2008, returned to Japan with a Diploma Foil award.

On a recent visit to Tokyo, Bob Merry was entertained to a typical Japanese meal by Yuichi and had a very enjoyable evening.

Yuichi is still coaching fencing in Japan, mainly with younger fencers, and it is his intention to return to our courses at some time in the future.

He sends his good wishes to all BAF members he had the pleasure of meeting.

EXAMINATION SUCCESS

The following candidates achieved passes in their exams at the end of the Autumn Course.

Advanced Epée

Jamie McClement

Level 3 Foil

Scott McMenemy

Andrew Norris

Nicholas Wynn

Tan Ze Han (part pass - Ind.)

Level 3 Epée

Tan Ze Han (part pass - Class)

Tamia John (part pass - Class)

Calum Maynard (part pass - Class)

Level 3 Sabre

Cindy Rudin

Tan Ze Han (part pass - Class)

Level 2 Foil

Cindy Rudin

Samuel Jackson

Level 2 Epée

Rene Kopiec

Andrew Robinson

Level 2 Sabre

Jessica de Bel

Level 1 Foil

Tan Ze Han

Cindy Rudin

Samuel Jackson

Level 1 Epée

Rene Kopiec

Tamia John

Andrew Robinson

Lewis McIntire

Tan Ze Han

Level 1 Sabre

Jessica de Bel

Tan Ze Han

We send our congratulations to all these successful candidates and wish them well in their future coaching.

DEN OF VICE

Contributions from the Academy's two Vice-Presidents



Back in the old days, when I started fencing, electric foil fencing was just beginning to come in. At competitions I went to, everyone fenced steam and then changed to electric fencing when everyone had electric equipment to fence with. The format was pools all the way through to the final. Sometimes those finals were fenced in the car park of the venue because the caretaker had kicked them out. (I'm talking about county events here). Also, women did not have competitions for épée and sabre.

There were men's foil, women's foil followed by the men's weapons! Women fenced for one hit less and had a smaller target area. Rules came in a very small pamphlet and rarely changed. The coaching scheme was a stable Leaders which was done with the then AFA; if you wanted to go further, you moved over to the BAF and did Advanced and Diploma. We all seemed to get on at that time.

Now look where we are!

Six weapon competitions, format usually with a first round of pools followed by Direct Elimination, equipment changes and piste changes. A rule book as thick as a scaffolding board, competitions flooding the week-ends, and an Academy coaching scheme that provides enough paperwork to wallpaper a small bedroom!

Sadly the BFA and BAF don't get on.

Now we are better and safer equipped, are organised better, have a much sounder more informed coach education system that produces quality coaches. We have competitions that have a greater age range, from under 10's to veterans, and now have women fencing sabre and épée up to Olympic levels (quite right too).

We still have problems. The main ones are cash and coaches. British Fencing needs more cash, which can only be provided by a larger membership; and a coach education system that includes the Academy. I, as a professional, am not recognized by the BFA, so why should I encourage all my fencers to become BFA members?

A change of attitude, from both sides (mostly BFA), could begin to build a coaching base for the future. Extremely wise, humble heads working together are needed.

I want the best for my fencers, the coaches I train, and for my beautiful sport of fencing. Fencing is not a win or lose contest but a character-building, life-changing activity.

See you all at the AGM!

Prof Peter Northam, Vice President.



Following on from my previous article, which highlighted the findings of a research project examining the reasons why some females coaches decide to become qualified while others do not, I was pleased to provoke some response from the membership - albeit one member! (See Letters, page 11)

Disappointed at the lack of response? - Not at all. It reminded me that Academy News is not the only vehicle through which the membership make their voice heard. I then took time to recall the many informal conversations I have been involved in with other fencing coaches, both male and female, discussing the imbalance of female coaches within fencing. These conversations provide rich anecdotal evidence about the attitudes and opinions of coaches in the fencing world and should not be dismissed due to their subjective nature. After all, we all need a sounding board from time to time. What does concern me is that it can become all too easy to generalise about male attitudes towards female coaches and we must therefore exercise caution to ensure that we don't tar everyone with the same brush. This leads onto my final thought regarding gender issues in coaching. If a male coach is discouraging towards a female coach and presents barriers to individual coach progression, is it enough to except the status quo and rise above it? In some instances this may well be the motivator and stimulus for certain individuals to improve. However, do we not plunge our sport into the dark ages if we become accepting of this type of behaviour?

Has any of this struck a chord with you, do you feel the need to air your thoughts to a wider audience, maybe hold your committee to account or simply sample the Hilton's single malt? Yes you've guess it, it's that time of year again...the British Academy of Fencing AGM 2015 is taking place on Saturday 3 January at the Hilton Hotel, Warwick. Specific details and arrangements can be found in this edition of Academy News (p 9) and via the BAF website (<http://www.baf-fencing.com/>). If you have never attended an AGM before or can't remember a year ago, the format following the AGM includes the Annual Dinner of the Academy where BAF awards, diplomas and certificates will be presented during the evening. Plus there is a free lunch at the AGM, pre-dinner drinks and a bottle of red and white wine per table! This is always a great opportunity to socialise with colleagues, meet up with old friends and to make new acquaintances. I hope to see you at the AGM in the New Year.

Prof. Louisa Miller, Vice President

UK Sainsbury's School Games

A Report by Maître Scott McMenemy



With frightening rapidity, September has come and gone and with it the annual UK Sainsbury's School Games, the Fencing being held in Manchester at the Wright Robinson College, Gorton. The event consisted of an individual and team contest held over four days, and competitors were selected from 13-18 year olds from the respective four nations of the UK and in all three weapons. The poules and DE were split over two days in all individual events, representative of what one would expect of a large national fencing championship (certainly outside of the UK), set up on a small scale reflecting the now recognisable "coloured piste" competition in order to make the event more "spectator friendly".

I will start by getting my negative impressions of the event out of the way in order to get to the more positive aspects.

The venue, a large inner city secondary school, was woefully inadequate for the event. Whilst there was ample room for pistes, large scoring equipment, and kit storage, further amenities were non-existent. Seating for spectators was uncomfortable, particularly after two or three days of sitting on the sciatica inducing bleachers. Not to mention the complete absence of any catering facilities (not including the burger van outside, present for a few hours on one day), and toilets that left little to the imagination. This was compounded by the fact that the school being used was in fact in session for half of the event, with the school bell sounding the change of every school lesson. We were also subjected to somewhat unnecessary running commentary which was at times both distracting for the fencers and officials. Ultimately all of the above detracted from a very enjoyable event and did little to enhance the "showcasing" of the competition.

On a positive note, the competition space was surprisingly spacious by UK standards, with carpeted technical areas and the entire competition space cordoned off and kit kept well out of the way in a separate hall. Video replay facilities were available on two of the six pistes (similar set-up to the last Senior Nationals at the EIS in Sheffield). Only four officials from each nation were allowed into the competition space to accompany and support athletes, our colleague Prof. Louisa Miller being one of the England coaches. The restriction of access did offer a much safer environment than we are accustomed to in the UK, without picnic munching, folding chair wielding over-bearing parents ricocheting around.

The event was ticketed at a very modest and heavily discounted cost. The first four pistes were easily visible from the bleachers but the furthest two pistes were difficult to see. However, with the tower lights and large display screens, one could still follow events sufficiently. Overall the standard of all three weapons was mixed; however, the final rounds did offer a glimpse at some of our more talented and well-practised youngsters in some exciting and tense fights. As always, support from the national crowds was at times, deafening and added to the "theatre" of the event. On that point I would like to dwell for a moment.

The purpose of the Games is to introduce high level competition to our young fencers with the ultimate intention of inspiring them to excel at their sport and to inspire others to participate in sport. The event offered an excellent glimpse for each of the fencers as to what it is like to compete under stressful and demanding circumstances and as a great advert for the sport in general. All in all I think the event achieved its aim. The table below shows the results for the team events, which garnered enthusiastic national support from the crowd and generated some exciting matches, with England dominating the Team events:

| | ME | WE | MF | WF | MS | WS |
|-----|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1st | England | England | England | England | England | Scotland |
| 2nd | Wales | Scotland | NI | Scotland | Wales | England |
| 3rd | NI | Wales | Scotland | NI | Scotland | Wales |
| 4th | Scotland | NI | Wales | Wales | NI | ~ |

As well as the able bodied fencing we were also able to see the wheel chair fencing competition, offering a great opportunity for our diverse sport to be showcased. What struck me the most about this event was not just the impressive technical and tactical abilities of the wheelchair fencers, but also the absolute sportsmanship and respect they paid both to each other and to the audience. I am glad that our able bodied fencers were able to watch the wheelchair fencers as they set a fantastic example of how two competitors should conduct themselves on the piste, with respect. Too often I see the abhorrent behaviour of young fencers in this country (and adults too), throwing of equipment, childish stamping of feet, and poor etiquette of pathetic handshakes and very often no saluting! The wheelchair fencers were the absolute opposite of this showing great sportsmanship and setting an excellent example to all. I hope wheelchair fencing is an aspect of our sport we can continue to develop in the future.

As well as the competition and national tracksuits, athletes were treated to events that included the opportunity to hear some of the UK's most successful athletes speak and answer questions on their careers and success, something that hopefully gave the event even more gravitas for the participants. Fencers were housed in student accommodation and bussed to the venue each day ensuring a relatively timely event.

Overall I was very impressed with the standard of the event despite the poor choice of venue. I hope that this event will continue as it does inspire young fencers in the UK to compete and to achieve the opportunity to represent their country in competition. The young fencers involved in this year's event clearly enjoyed themselves! We as coaches should be using such events to inspire our young fencers and to help them cut their teeth in competition, preparing them for greater things in the future.

I for one was very pleased with two of my fencers taking home individual bronze medals in Womens' Epée (England) and Mens' Epée (Scotland).

WORSLEY'S WORDS

Musings from your Members' Rep.



Well another year draws to an end and by the time you read these words another Denstone residential course will have been and gone. Congratulations to those who passed their examinations and my sympathies to those who didn't. Whatever the result, remember, keep going; onwards and upwards. In this my fifth and last article of the year, I'd like to remind the membership of the Academy's AGM that is being held on the first weekend of the New Year. As in previous years, prior to the AGM is the meeting of the Maitres d'Escrime, Provosts and Members and I again would ask that any members that are interested in the future direction of the Academy attend, as this is your chance to ask questions about the Academy. If anyone has any questions that you would like me to put to the Committee, so I can have an answer for you at the Maitres d'Escrime, Provosts and Members meeting, then could you send them to me before the end of November, before the next committee meeting. Remember, any questions I present from the members are done anonymously, unless you specifically ask for your name to be included. I would also like to remind you that the role of Members Representative is elected each year, so if you think it's time for a change, then have your nominations ready for the Maitres d'Escrime, Provosts and Members meeting.

After this, there will be the AGM itself, where members will have the chance to question the committee directly. I would especially like to see some of the newer members of the Academy at the AGM and hopefully stay for the annual Dinner in the evening, which for many is the best part of the AGM weekend; a chance to catch up with old friends or make new ones. Everyone there will be a coach so you will always have something in common and there will always be someone to talk to.

Usually in this edition of the Academy News I talk about the Brian Pitman Memorial Award and ask the members of the Academy to nominate possible candidates for the aforementioned award.

A quick reminder – *"This is awarded at the discretion of the committee to a member of the Academy who has shown particular skill or dedication to the promotion of and/or the development of fencing for young people under the age of 18, with a particular emphasis on non-performance or participation fencing."*

This year I mentioned it in an earlier edition of the Academy News in the hope that this would give people a bit more thinking time. Well I hope it has, because I've not received a single nomination yet and, as far as I'm aware, neither has any other member of the committee. So get your thinking caps on and get some names thrown into the hat. It's been a couple of years since the award has been handed out and I can't believe that we do not have a member of the Academy that "fits the bill". Remember that previous nominations that were unsuccessful can apply again, but please only do so if you are sure they actually meet the criteria for the award (see the previous edition of the Academy News for details).

On another note, at the last committee meeting at item brought up for consideration was resurrecting the BAF championships. If any of the members out there have any memories of when the last BAF championships were last held and what trophies were awarded I would like to hear from you. I would also like to hear any stories and memories of the championships. I don't need any great detail, just memories and impressions. Please feel free to reply by email, or, if you prefer, come and talk to me at the AGM. I would be most interested to hear from you.

Well, that's it for another year. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the AGM and I hope you enjoy the remainder of the year.

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



Swept-hilt rapier, possibly Italian, circa 1640.

As this one has a cutting edge and a wider blade than a purely thrusting rapier, it could be described as a 'sword rapier' in modern terminology. The blade is 38" (97cm) long and is stamped on both sides with half a dozen crosses and dots. Some years ago the Prince of Liechtenstein sold off some surplus weaponry from the armoury in Vaduz and I was fortunate to get this one. It had a bare wooden grip (original) when I bought it, but has since been expertly re-bound with twisted wire, with Turks Head finials.

It is heavy (over 2 lbs, almost 1 kg) and clumsy. No movie-style leaping about with this one, I assure you! Using this against a modern epee, you wouldn't have a hope! As one of my students pointed out one night, your best chance would lie in the fact that your opponent would probably have a sword of similar weight. I'm fairly sure it would have been used with a left-hand dagger for parrying. Some parries were around by 1640, of course, but your best chance of survival in an encounter using this beast would be to execute a 'Cobb's Traverse'. Never heard of that? Introduced by

one Mr. Cobb, of course, you turn round and run like hell !!

Porthos

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the British Academy of Fencing will take place on Saturday 3rd January 2015 at 11.00 am at the:

**Hilton Hotel, Warwick
Junction 15, M40 , A429
Stratford Road Warwick
CV34 6RE
Telephone: 01926 499555**

All members of the Academy are urged to attend.

The meeting of Maîtres d'Escrime, Provosts and Members to commence at 9.30 am.

Following the Annual General Meeting, the Annual Dinner of the Academy will be held (Cost £20 per head - see below). Those attending are asked to assemble for pre-dinner drinks at 7.00 pm for a 7.30 pm sit-down. BAF Awards, Diplomas and Certificates will be presented during the evening.

All positions on the Committee, including those of the President and the other Directors, are due for election at this year's AGM. Nominations for the position of President, with a proposer and seconder, should be submitted, in writing, to the Secretary, by the 30th November. Postal votes are allowed for the position of President. Members wishing to apply for a postal vote should contact the Secretary by the 13th December. Proposals for alteration or addition to the articles are required, in writing to the Secretary, at least 21 days before the meeting (by 13th December). Other proposals to be tabled at the AGM should be submitted to the Secretary 10 days before the AGM (by 26th December).

Apologies for absence may be forwarded via any Committee Member.

Professor Bob Merry, Secretary

BAF DINNER - MENU

Cost: £20.00 per person

Please select one dish from each course and send choices and payment to Prof. Louisa Miller by **Monday 15 December** at the very latest.

Email: louisajmiller@hotmail.com Phone: 07849 774531 Post: Howard Cottage, Kenilworth Road, Hampton-In-Arden, Solihull B92 0LW

Please state clearly the guest name and their choices for starter, main and dessert.

Please make your payment in advance either by BACS or cheque as detailed below.

The default choice if you do not send information will be leek and potato soup, roast chicken breast and apple and toffee crumble.

Cheques payable to *The British Academy of Fencing*. BACS payment details – Account name: The British Academy of Fencing. Account number: 41501089. Sort code: 40-43-37.

For international payments – IBAN: GB16MIDL40433741501089 SWIFT/BIC: MIDLGB22

BACS payment reference should be your membership number, name and AGM, e.g. 409/S Clough/AGM

Starter

Selection of rustic breads served with olive oil and balsamic vinegar

Chicken and mushroom pate served on a bed of mixed leaves and accompanied by herb crostini and red onion chutney

Leek and potato soup, served with herb croutons and chopped chives (v)

Main

Roast chicken breast served with potato gratin and roast red wine gravy

Steamed haddock fillet, served with thyme roasted potatoes and finished with a butter and chive sauce

Blue cheese and leek tart topped with tomato and basil sauce served with buttered new potatoes (v)

All served with either Panache of Seasonal Vegetables, or Honey Roasted Vegetables.

Dessert

Vanilla cheese cake served with toffee cream

Apple and toffee crumble with vanilla pod custard

Fresh cream filled profiteroles topped with warm chocolate sauce

SWORDSMEN OF THE SILVER SCREEN - PT 8

By Andy Wilkinson

A.N.OTHER FENCER 19?? - ????



Well dear friends, it is that time of year when the last 2014 issue of Academy News lands on your doormat.

I hope you have enjoyed my occasional articles on the exploits of those who use swordplay to entertain, the stage fighters, fight directors, sword masters and above all the actors, both on stage and screen.

I have enjoyed revisiting all my old history notes, letters and articles I have written over the many years I have studied this form of fencing.

I was surprised at how many photographs and books I have on the subject, not just about fencing but on history in general. In fact, my personal library on the subject is quite diverse, from Homer to castle designs, siege warfare, the use of horses in battle, jousting, cavalry warfare, to bayonet fencing, archery, Angelo and the modern Masters.

I have in the past trained in most of the above forms of combat, jousting included; that is, after all, how I attained my actor's Equity card, as a Knight of the Round Table, falling off horses three times a day at weekends to entertain the crowds.

I have fought in the Battle of Agincourt on film, been shot by arrows more times than I care to mention, trampled by horses, shot, punched, kicked, blown up, run over and set on fire, taken an axe to the chest as a Viking and fought alongside Robin Hood.

As my osteopath has said to me on more than one occasion, not only have I been around the block a few times, I have fallen off the block, rode a horse through the block and crashed into it one too many times!

For me to be able to have so much fun and be paid to do it, I first had to be trained. Fencing was my path and I had two of the best teachers around to guide me. I was studying under Professors Roy and Angela Goodall; my notes reflect my years of study with them. I have a filing cabinet drawer at my production office stuffed with notes I made while working with them from courses, or just chatting over a glass of an evening.

I obviously trained elsewhere as well – riding horses, jousting and general stunting from people I have met over the 30 years I have worked professionally in the business. My training continues and I learn something new every time a project comes across my desk. If I do not know the answer, I will know someone who would.

Our BAF course officer and I have often wondered why we have not had too many enquiries, as to the Stage Combat workshop the Academy offers.

I was lucky; I found Roy and Angela to train me, but to have this course available today, when there is an AAI World Championship in theatrical fencing, I am surprised there are so few fencers wishing to expand their knowledge, especially if you recall I took an Academy team to this championship in Vichy, France in 2000. We won gold in the troupe event, silver in the duo, and a special award in a solo single bladed training exercise! I am still the only GB fight director to have achieved this to date - why?



The BAF Stage Combat Course is NOT a certificated qualification course; how could it be? You cannot learn in a few hours what fight directors take years to master. It would be akin to attending Denstone without ever fencing and expect to take a level 5 diploma award at the end of the week!

No matter what journey you take, it requires a first step. This course is the first step that will guide you to the right path of learning what has been a career for me, a hobby for some, but where ever the journey takes you, over the horizon to new adventures, why not come along for the ride.

Why not give our Course Officer a call in the New Year?

Finally, I would like to thank the President and Committee for all of their support this year especially Professor Bob Merry, for whose patience in editing my endless jibber jabber over the past year has been nothing but a Herculean task. I need to buy him a drink for his efforts (*Aha! Got it in writing! Ed.*). His knowledge, advice and kindness have been greatly valued. Cheers Sire!

I would also like to thank Katy, our honorary legal advisor and my very patient wife. Katy works in the background, unseen, supporting the Academy in many ways. This year alone, while I have been on productions, she has arranged all my personal travel arrangements as Team Captain and found flights and hotels for our team going to Italy, advised both the President and me on my attempt to revise the Rules for the AAI Theatrical Fencing Championships, held the fort at home while I have travelled to committee meetings on Sundays and while I spent a week in Italy over the summer holidays, and generally putting up with an overgrown boy scout.

I wish you all a Very Happy Christmas and a Healthy and Prosperous New Year.

Have a fantastic time, be safe, and see you at the AGM!

As a familiar contract player at Warner Bros. would say, "That's All Folk's"....



Letters

From Kate Elvin

I really enjoyed the articles by Liz Williams and Louisa Miller in the last edition and identified strongly with many of the points.

I am a competitive fencer, recently turned serious coach, and I am writing this from a fencer's point of view. I have been coached by many coaches over the years so feel I know a bit about the subject.

The focus in this country tends to be on coaches rather than fencers. In line with sports coaches in general they are mostly male and generally not very encouraging of female coaches. This attitude is upsetting and the extent of it has surprised me. It will discourage some women but just spurs me on. There is no reason why women should not be as good coaches as men and, since we are short of coaches, more encouragement would be great. Knowing how to fence is not the same as knowing how to win; sadly I did not discover this till late in my fencing career.

It is the fencer who wins and they will only win consistently if they have the correct mental attitude; everything else such as coaching, fitness training and nutrition is secondary, although obviously very necessary. Some fencers have this attitude from the beginning, but for most it has to be learned and it can be a slow, difficult process. Due to the general lack of support for fencers in this country it usually falls to the coach to guide the fencer to ensure all necessary training is in place. I think a training record is useful for competitive fencers as it helps them realize what they need to do to be successful and helps to keep them on track. It should be their record not the coaches.

Fencers who want to do well deserve to be coached as an individual, with lots of discussion on what they would like in a lesson, what they feel about the lesson, what happened in their last competition, and all the good and bad points thoroughly discussed.

Obviously fencers sometimes need to be taken outside their comfort zone, but if they are taught things they want to learn and which suit their fencing style, they are more likely to use them. It should be the fencer's style, not the coaches. Promote the attitude that winning is their responsibility, not the coaches. Encourage confidence and enjoyment and make them the fencers they want to be.

Kate Elvin

MORE USEFUL BITS.....

BAF RESIDENTIAL COURSE

Easter Course - 6th to 11th April 2015

Course to be held at Denstone College, Staffordshire.

Provisional Fees: £452 (members) £524 (non-members) - to be confirmed

A one-day personal performance course may be held during the month preceding the Easter Course, subject to interest - more details to follow.

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.

FURTHER USEFUL INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS ATTENDING AGM

The address for the venue is given in the notice of the meeting on page 9 and accommodation can be booked there. For those seeking other, possibly cheaper, hotels, the following may be of interest.

Holiday Inn Express (directly opposite Hilton Warwick)
Junction 15, M40
Stratford Road
Warwick
CV34 6TW
<http://www.hiexpress.com> and search for Warwick

Warwick Arms Hotel
High Street
Warwick
CV34 4AT
<http://warwickarmshotel.com/contact.htm>

The Lord Leycester Hotel
Jury Street
Warwick
CV34 4EJ
<http://www.lord-leicester.co.uk/>



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.

Closing date for entries: 11th Nov 2014

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

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.