

British Academy of Fencing **ACADEMY NEWS**

November 2016
Issue 88

"Run by coaches for coaches"



QUADRUPLE DIPLOMAS

Whilst the recent Autumn course may not have been the best attended course, it certainly made up for that with the quality of the examination results.

Four candidates, William Gallimore-Tallen, Lewis McIntyre, Sam Smith and Harry Gulliver, took Diploma examinations at Epée and all four were successful. The highly experienced board of examiners, chaired by Professor Tom Etchells, were obviously impressed by the quality of all of the quartet, judging by the high marks they awarded. In particular, Sam Smith achieved a Distinction. With both Sam and William achieving their first Diploma at the age of nineteen, their results augur well for the future of the Academy.



William, Lewis, Sam and Harry - four successful Diploma candidates

More excellent results were achieved on the board for Level 2 and 3 candidates, with all three examinees achieving good passes. An outstanding performance was achieved by Peter Barwell, with a Distinction at Level 3 Foil. His competitive background came to the fore in his special lesson, where he certainly raised the level of his pupil's ability to defend with successive parries against some ferocious compound attacks.

Nick Wynn achieved a good result in passing his Level 3 Epée, with a particularly good class lesson, whilst David Browning passed Level 2 Foil. This meant that all the members of the course who elected to take examinations passed, an almost unprecedented 100% pass rate.

During the course, as well the exam day, course members were assisted by young members of Four of Clubs, who gave up much of their half-term to act as pupils for the coaches on the course, who could benefit from having more time to practise their lessons and less on having to act as pupils for their fellow coaches. The help of these young enthusiasts was much appreciated.

IN THIS ISSUE

<i>Useful Info</i>	<i>p 3</i>
<i>President Writes</i>	<i>p 4</i>
<i>Den of Vice</i>	<i>p 5</i>
<i>Coaching from the Ground Up...</i>	<i>p 7</i>
<i>Letters from Lewis.....</i>	<i>p 8</i>
<i>AGM Notices.....</i>	<i>p 9</i>
<i>Autumn Course.....</i>	<i>p 10</i>
<i>Letters / Briefs.....</i>	<i>p 11</i>
<i>More Useful Bits.....</i>	<i>p 12</i>

NEXT ISSUE: February 2017

Contributions by January 10th, please.

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USEFUL INFORMATION**ACADEMY
WEB SITE**

**FOR ALL THE LATEST
INFORMATION AND
MERCHANDISING GO TO
THE ACADEMY WEB SITE
AT**

WWW.BAF-FENCING.COM

**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 Épée		
Key Teaching Points Sabre		
Key Coaching Points Foil		
Key Coaching Points Épée		
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 6.1 – 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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THE PRESIDENT WRITES.....



Denstone Residential Course Oct 2016 half-term

First the bad news - the number of attendees was disappointingly low. One of the principle reasons for the poor attendance is thought to be that Denstone's October half-term is out of sync with main-stream education half-terms. Other reasons, which have been suggested, are apathy, a shrinking customer base, a general lack of enthusiasm for coaching qualifications, the cost of coaching equipment and falling numbers of those interested in coaching. The attendance on Academy courses does not appear to be limited to us, as I understand the BFA and organisations around the world are also experiencing similar difficulties, where coach education and qualifications are concerned.

The balance of the course was 50/50; that is, there were equal numbers of those training for Advanced and Diploma as there were training for Levels 2 and 3. Training was delivered by Profs. Andrew Norris, Isobel Bruce-Combes and myself, each of whom gave their all and worked tirelessly throughout the whole course.

The good news - judging by the number of comments, compliments and thanks, the course appears to have been well received and valued by all concerned. And there's more good news, the pass rate for the course was 100%, which I think is unprecedented, and that's not all, since every candidate received at least one credit or more and some passed with distinctions. I felt very privileged to give out these results to such a group of hardworking and talented coaches. The lessons I witnessed during the examinations were some of the highest quality ones at Levels 2, 3 and Diploma that I have seen during my tenure as President. I hope this bodes well for the future

The examination results of the course are as follows:

Diploma Epée

Lewis McIntyre

Harry Gulliver

William Gallimore Tallen

Sam Smith

Level 3 Foil

Peter Barwell

Level 1 and 3 Epée

Nick Wynn

Level 2 Foil

David Browning

On behalf of the committee and the course I would like to offer a special thank you to Dave Jerry for putting the course together, to Stuart Clough, who gave of his time in administrating the examination, and to our examiners Peter Stewart, Tom Etchells, Liam Harrington, Graham Stretton, Jonathan Katz, Bob Merry and John Worsley

Philip Bruce

DEN OF VICE

Contributions from the Academy's two Vice-Presidents



In some of my previous articles I've written a few words about footwork practice. In my experience some kind of footwork training session is a common feature in most fencing clubs. Often it is done in isolation from other areas of training, the purpose being, as far as I can ascertain, to allow the fencers to concentrate purely on their footwork technique without any other distractions.

So if we're going to do footwork sessions as coaches, we need to decide what the practical application is of what we teach. In other words, can we take what we do in footwork sessions and apply it to a class or individual lesson. More importantly, do we do it? If we don't it might be worth rethinking what we do.

A typical footwork exercise might involve the fencers stepping forwards and backwards, with different numbers of steps in either direction, at various speeds, with different sizes of steps, and occasional lunges. If that sounds familiar, try taking the exercise and include it in one of your lessons. For example, use the footwork to setup an offensive or defensive action. Then have a think about how it feels. Did the footwork feel like it served a useful function, or was the fencer just moving backwards and forwards with no purpose? If it's the latter try changing some of the footwork, and endeavour to make it relevant to modern fencing.

A lot of coaches tend to concentrate on bladework in their individual lessons. It is an important part of a fencer's training. After all, if they can't actually hit anything, then no amount of clever footwork is going to help. However, intelligent use of footwork is only marginally less important and there is more to it than just coaching the correct technique. There is also more to it than just keeping distance.

Using change of speed and direction, plus different types of footwork to break distance and to distract or confuse an opponent is hugely important. Therefore it is vital that footwork training is as effective as possible. If fencers do a fifteen-minute footwork session and then never use any of it in lessons, then the footwork session probably was not as useful as it might have been. In the UK we often only see our fencers once or twice a week, so it's important we make the best use of the time available.

Liam Harrington, Vice President



In the time I have been involved with fencing (still relatively short compared to some members of the Academy, I will admit!), I have noticed a trend towards single weapon clubs and competitions. In épée, in particular, this trend is quite pronounced. The Elite Épée Junior Series and associated senior competitions have been enjoying particular success in recent years. Older single weapon events, such as the Miller-Hallett and Milner-Barry Opens, also seem to be more resistant to the pressures faced by organisers than big multi-weapon events such as the Bristol Open, which sadly did not run in 2016. It is harder to say what is going on in clubs, since only the most prolific travelling coaches are likely to see inside more than one or two clubs on a regular basis. However, I suspect a similar trend exists.

When setting up Southampton Épée Club I considered the advantages and disadvantages of a single weapon environment carefully. I came to the conclusion that channeling my resources towards a single weapon would lead to a higher quality experience for participants. As I hoped to primarily build the club by training fencers from scratch, I was not worried that I would not attract the custom of experienced sabreurs and foilists. Beginners would not object to conforming to my weapon of choice, because they just wanted to learn fencing. I wouldn't have to worry about the problems I had previously encountered in multi-weapon clubs, either. It is important to note that this decision was taken in context and was right for me at the time.

The BAF, on the other hand, is firmly planted in the multi-weapon camp. Take the residential courses as an example. Only a few fencing masters (albeit very hard-working ones!) are needed to cater for all levels and all weapons, even on the larger courses of recent years. Participants bring their own equipment and help each other out as stooges in class and individual lessons, even if it means picking up an unfamiliar weapon from time to time.

The overwhelmingly important factor for the Academy is tapping into the broad customer base that is the entire fencing community. We need a critical mass of people attending courses to cover the fixed costs of putting them on. We also need a mix of candidates at different levels and weapons to be sure that everyone has someone similar with whom to work throughout the week. This also means that a candidate can see where they might be going next by looking around the room. Furthermore, the Academy's future depends on training new people, who can in the future staff courses and act as examiners.

To tempt new and existing colleagues to attend we offer a great deal of choice. Coaches can attend the course to work towards any of Levels 2-5 in any weapon, with Level 1 assessments offered during the course. Coaches who simply wish to take an exam can arrange to turn up just for that without attending the course, or even arrange an examination at another time more convenient for them. Coaches can also attend the course simply to refresh or improve their skills with no obligation to sit an exam. With courses running regularly twice a year, those with more on their plate can plan ahead and attend when it suits them.

Members often ask, "What can I do to help the Academy?" The most important thing you as members can do is recruit more people to do what you have already done; attend courses, achieve your qualifications, become part of the community. A recommendation from a colleague is much more powerful than any other advertisement or marketing we could do.

Andrew Norris, Vice President

FROM THE COLLECTION OF "PORTHOS"



One of the founders of the BAF was the late John Aylward, fencer, author, sword historian and collector. He wrote a number of books on the history of swords, mostly small swords. He received his last individual lesson at the age of 91. This silver hilted smallsword came from his collection, and still carries a small, neatly written label giving its details.

The hilt is of hall marked silver, with a beautifully silver-wirebound grip. The plain blade is 30¾ inches long (78 cm) and the forte is unusually wide at 1¾ inches (4.5 cm). Note : it isn't the wide forte of a 'Colichemarde' blade. More on that some other time.

It dates to 1725. It is incredibly light and easy to handle and would have been a weapon of choice for me, had I been around then - if I could have afforded it! Samuel Pepys bought a smallsword (probably not silver) for 23 shillings (£1.15), plus one for 'his man' costing 60 pence! A rich gentleman might have paid up to £10 - 12, or some-one very wealthy may have paid up to £50+.

Those prices of £10 and upwards would have been *serious* money in those days. They are still easily available in the major auction houses, but (and I hope you're sitting down!!) don't expect much change from £1,000 - maybe even £2,000 or *more* for a particularly fine specimen.

"Porthos"

COACHING FROM THE GROUND UP

A report from the recent course in Warrington

During the Members' meeting at the AGM in January, there were a number of requests for the Academy to run courses that were aimed at coaches who worked in grassroots clubs. Lewis McIntyre, the Members' Representative, took this on board and, together with Professor Andrew Norris, organised a weekend that was designed to answer this need. The course was held at the King's Leadership Academy in Warrington in September and was entitled "Coaching from the Ground Up".



There were a number of contributions made to the course, with practical sessions run by Professors Philip Bruce, Andrew Norris and Liam Harrington, as well as talks given by Professors Isobel Bruce-Combes, Bob Merry and Maître Donald Walker (for Donald's personal view of the course, see Letters on page 11).

There were various aspects of coaching at the grassroots level covered during the weekend, including using the BAF resource material, such as the Compulsory Exercises, to develop lessons that were interesting and challenging for the pupil, making lessons more competitive and club training that involved exercises which included both footwork and blade skills.

The course were also shown examples of how to coach large groups (especially of young fencers) using exercises and drills written out for them. Pupils were encouraged to help each other in reaching a good standard of performance, with more experienced fencers being paired with less experienced ones. (*)

During the talks, the issue of motivation was discussed, as well as using the Academy's Proficiency Award scheme and making the course participants aware that our senior coaches have a wealth of experience, which is itself a resource that can be tapped into by newer coaches.



The course itself was well received by those that attended. Among comments that were made afterwards were:

"I have gained quite a lot, such as putting things into a fighting context"

"The sessions were good for the nuts and bolts of trying to build and run a club."

"I have made lots of notes and these will give me more ideas for my lesson plans"

"I have learnt different ways of presenting the material to make the lessons more interesting. My club lessons next week will gain from this"



Although the course was reasonably well attended, with some attendees travelling long distances to be there, it deserved to be even better supported. It was exactly what people had asked for and was well organised. Every Academy member had received a brochure about the course with the July edition of Academy News. It is to be hoped that the organisers and senior coaches who contributed to the course are not discouraged from repeating something similar in the future. If it was too far away to suit you and you want something similar near you, then find a suitable venue and suggest it to the Members' Representative. Who knows, perhaps something can be arranged.

On a final note, during the weekend a Level 1 course was run and the sole course member, Udu Yapp, gained a Level 1 Epée award. Congratulations, Udu!

() This idea has recently been adapted for use at the Editor's own club, using a series of laminated worksheets on a variety of topics. If you want to see examples of these, to help inspire you, contact Bob Merry (bobmerrybaf@aol.com) and some will be emailed to you. They are proving popular with our younger fencers.*

LETTERS FROM LEWIS

Correspondence from your Members' Rep.



I recently got a new appreciation for the skillset I'm acquiring as a developing coach. I'm not going to bore you with the details but, long story short, the coach education has been hugely beneficial to other areas of my life.

I'm not a full-time coach; I don't think I have the organisational skills and sheer determination that it would take to get that job off the ground. There was once a time when I was looking to start full-time, but as a career it is looking more and more difficult to make work, so I'm impressed by those of you who can. As it stands at the moment, there are quite a few signs which indicate times are hard for the professional coach; fencing has been removed from GCSE list, some competitions are not being run due to lack of interest and various bodies are developing a fascination for those plastic toys people are using for mock fencing.

A number of coach education events from different bodies have also failed to do as well as hoped this year, which adds to the indication of issues coaches are having. Conditions like this make the coach's job harder that it needs to be to find a decent gig and sell their sport. For those out there who are able to stay in the game, please, I encourage you to share any tips with fellow coaches. This is the kind of climate where coaches need to be collaborating to help each other succeed. Yes, there would be less competition if you let those around you fail, but the success shouldn't come at the expense of the sport. Bob Merry recently had quite a bit of useful info and pointers, which he shared at our Coaching from the Ground Up course (alongside a number of other speakers and demonstrations).

Despite the fact I'm not a full-time coach, fencing is one of the ways I try to develop as a functioning adult and generally attempt to be a better person, particularly through coach education, but also through competing. I've learnt a lot so far through coach education, as I probably keep saying... From being able to work under scrutiny or immense pressure and retaining the ability to be able to respond effectively to feedback (a skill which is incredibly useful in the professional world) to the value of not always trying to qualify my misgivings or failings with excuses and just bloody get on with it (a lesson for life in general I suppose); there have been some hard-earned and useful lessons. Skills I'm learning as a coach translate directly into other areas of my life, which is great.

Now, if coach education has prepared me to "win" (read: to get where I want to be as an adult) then competing has definitely taught me to lose. It's taught me to lose again and again (and again) until I could finally work out that losing doesn't have to mean failing. Losing is only being defeated in a fight, failing, in this context, is not being able to see progress or any achievements at all (also known as just being a sore loser). This was a huge lesson for me and probably shouldn't have taken as long as it did, but hey ho.

What I guess I'm trying to say, in less grand terms, is that by developing skills as coaches and skills of fencers, we also develop skills incredibly applicable to the outside world. I've seen a few coaches and fencers go on to achieve things using things they've acquired or practised in their fencing world (and I don't mean something as specific as a direct riposte to pass a driving test; that would be weird). It's just nice to see that it has an obvious effect in general life.

A thing I've been trying to do through this role is be generally more organised and useful in some capacity. It should be no surprise to the majority of you, especially those that returned their membership forms, that I've been helping Stuart out with Membership Renewals this year. The co-ordination of this mammoth task is a huge amount of work, particularly alongside a full-time job and other hobbies. I'm not looking for praise for this task, I volunteered and I'm doing it for myself to practice skills, but I would like to express immense appreciation to Stuart. He's done this (and this is not a dig at anyone, it's just part of the nature of the job) thankless task for a number of years without complaint, and this is only a part of his role. There's quite a bit to work out with this process, so if you've not yet received something you should have, or are waiting to hear back from me, please get in touch again; your patience is appreciated.

Lewis McIntyre, Members' Representative

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the British Academy of Fencing will take place on Saturday 7th January 2017 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 £22.50 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, except those of the President and Vice-Presidents, are due for election at this year's AGM. Proposals for alteration or addition to the articles are required, in writing to the Secretary, at least 21 days before the meeting (by 17th December). Other proposals to be tabled at the AGM should be submitted to the Secretary 10 days before the AGM (by 28th December).

Apologies for absence may be forwarded via any Committee Member.

Professor Bob Merry, Secretary

BAF DINNER - MENU

Cost: £22.50 per person

Please select one dish from each course and send choices and payment to Prof. Andrew Norris by Wednesday 14th December at the very latest. (E-mail: andrew@southampton-epce.co.uk Tel.: 07714201129)

Starters:

*Roasted red pepper and tomato soup
Fan of melon with seasonal fruits and raspberry coulis*

Mains:

*Roasted breast of chicken with leeks and smoked bacon, served with a white wine and herb cream sauce
Baked fillet of salmon set on a compote of spinach and oyster mushroom with a lemon and tarragon sauce
Butternut and asparagus Wellington with a chive cream sauce (Vegetarian)*

Dessert:

*Chocolate torte with Irish cream sauce
Individual strawberry Pavlova with red berry syrup*

Please state clearly the guest name and their choices for starter, main and dessert. The default choice if you do not send information will be soup, chicken breast and chocolate torte.

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

Send cheques payable to "The British Academy of Fencing" to Prof. A Norris, 103 Cowley Close, Southampton, SO16 9WE or pay by BACS using the following 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, eg. 546NORRISAGM



Pictures from the Autumn Course

*Practice (above) and
The End Result (below)*



EXAMINATION SUCCESS

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

Diploma Epée

William Gallimore-Tallen
Harry Gulliver
Lewis McIntyre
Sam Smith

Level 3 Foil

Peter Barwell

Level 3 Epée

Nicholas Wynn

Level 2 Foil

David Browning

Level 1 Epée

Nicholas Wynn

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

Letters

From Maître Donald Walker

Dear Editor

As someone who has been agitating for a course like this for some time, I was looking forward to it. I have come away from every Academy course with plenty of ideas and I expected this one to be the same. I was wrong, I came away with a hell of a lot more. Professor Isobel Bruce-Combes's lecture on motivation was inspirational and I have already put a lot of what I learnt into practice. Likewise, Professor Philip Bruce's exercises for teaching technique and for recycling compulsories gave a whole new insight into involving pupils and increasing their awareness and commitment. The night after the course I started a new class and discovered one of my pupils didn't speak much English. Thanks to what I'd learned, I was able to bring him on much better than I would have before. Professor Andrew Norris gave an excellent lecture on lessons that put strokes into a fighting context and Professor Bob Merry imparted a great deal of his experience of running clubs at a grass root level. All in all it was a brilliant course and there was a huge amount to be taken from it.

Unfortunately, the support from the members of the BAF was not forthcoming and I can only say "It's your loss!" After all the whingeing at the last AGM about the lack of courses, the turnout at this one was a disgrace.

Donald

JEAN MacLARDY

It is with much sadness that Scottish Fencing reports the passing of Jean MacLardy. Jean began fencing at a house wives' group in 1971. From this beginners' introductory class she went on to pass her SAFU and BAF coaching exams. She coached many youngsters in her time, starting some international fencers on their paths to success. She ran fencing clubs at St Margaret's School and Scotus Academy to name just two. As well as coaching, she was an active committee member standing on the Scottish Schools Committee.

There will be many in the fencing community with fond memories of Jean. Our condolences go to Jean's family.

BRIEFS

More ideas obtained from various coaches

At first, many young fencers lack the confidence to actually go for a hit, possibly being nervous about the effect on their partner or opponent. One way to overcome this is to give them something to hit that they are not so worried about - the coach! Line the pupils up in a queue and let them take turns at practising their hitting on the coach.

Or how about a simple competitive game or exercise? Many of you will be familiar with this one, but there may be some that haven't tried it yet:

The pupils work in pairs, with one designated as the Attacker and the other the Defender. Points can *only* be scored by hitting with a riposte; no other part of a phrase counts, although the riposte can be either direct, indirect, or even compound. Obviously, there's not a lot in this game for the Attacker, who may be tempted to simply hold back from the attack, in order to prevent the Defender's riposte from hitting, and will quickly get bored. To make sure that the Attacker really tries to attack, the other main rule is that, if the attack hits, although it does not score a point, the roles are reversed and the Attacker is now the Defender, able to score points. The game continues to a target number of points.

This game can be used at the end of a lesson on defence, or, with more advanced pupils, as a tactical exercise in the use of different parry/riposte combinations, or in methods of provoking an attack.

(Editor: We'd like to keep this feature going as a regular part of Academy News. For this, we need YOUR ideas and suggestions. Coaching tips, motivational sayings, etc. All are welcome.)

MORE USEFUL BITS.....**BAF RESIDENTIAL COURSE****Easter Course****10th April to 15th April 2017****Course to be held at Denstone College, Staffordshire.****Fees: To be confirmed*****Please contact our Course Officer, Dave Jerry, for more information*****Contact details on page 3****FURTHER USEFUL INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS ATTENDING THE 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-leycester.co.uk/>

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