

# British Academy of Fencing **ACADEMY NEWS**

**September 2012**  
**Issue 67**

***"Run by coaches for coaches"***



## GLORIOUS GAMES

Well, it's over! Between the spectacular Opening and Closing Ceremonies, we have been treated to a wonderful celebration of sport at London 2012. The organisers can feel satisfied at a job well done and they, and indeed the nation, can take pride in these Olympic Games.

For the first time, our sport was not confined to a quick ten minutes of highlights. Thanks to the extra 26 channels supplied by the BBC on satellite and the internet, as well as Red Button options, it was possible to follow *all* the fencing, from the first "en garde" to the final "halte", from the comfort of one's armchair.

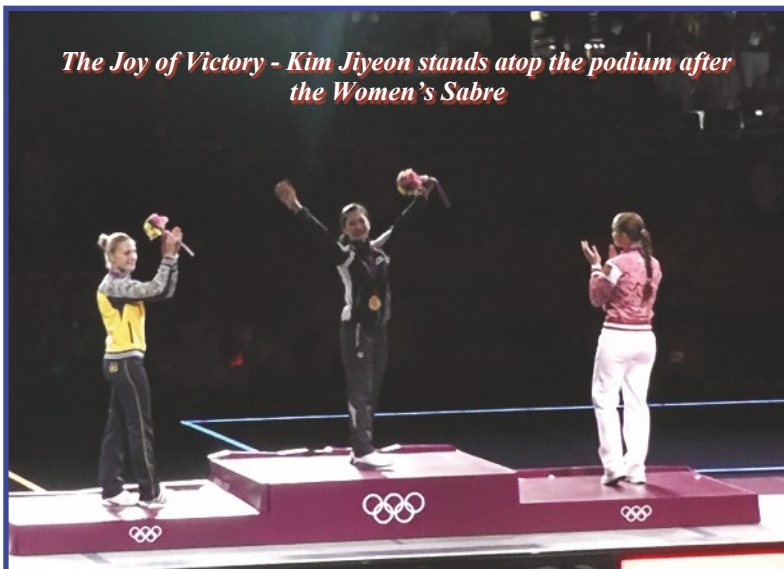
The presentation of the sport was excellent, with five pistes in the centre of one of the Excel arenas. Wireless technology was used throughout, so there were no spools or wires to mar the 21st century look of the pistes, with their spectacular lighting system,

as supplied by Leon Paul (see their web site for more details of this). Within the arena, a mixture of video presentations, music and enthusiastic "cheerleading" from the arena host created, in the spaces between fencing, a lively and noisy atmosphere, enhanced by groups of fans from the many nations represented. (Will we ever regard "We Will Rock You" in the same way again?)

Whilst the GB results may not be all that might have been hoped, there was much British representation amongst the organisation; in the Directoire Technique, amongst the panel of referees, arena announcers and so on. There were also many familiar faces, including Academy members, among the many volunteers, in their distinctive purple and red tops. These were the main point of contact for the visiting public and they definitely made the Games for many. A special mention should also be made of the military personnel who had been drafted in to man the security checks. As one approached, they said "It's just like airport security"; wrong! - these guardians of our safety were smiling and helpful!

John Worsley, in his column on page 10, has some valid points to make about the legacy of the Games. Our sport has been exposed to a new audience and we now need to make use of that. A straw poll amongst youngsters taking part in taster sessions during the summer holidays has shown that a large number saw the Olympic fencing coverage and were inspired to have a go. It is perhaps fitting now for all our coaches to adopt one of the key phrases used to promote London 2012 and seek to ***"Inspire a Generation"***.

*The Joy of Victory - Kim Jiyeon stands atop the podium after the Women's Sabre*



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***Contributions by October 10th, please***

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<u>Level</u>	<u>Rate</u>
Diploma	37.75
Maitre d'Escrime and Provost	30.35
Member	25.00
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10+ Awards £3.40 each

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Figures in **RED** are for non-BAF members

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Level 1 Assessment £11.00

Level 2 to Diploma £21.00 (**£26.00**)

These are for "normal" exams - for Special exams, consult the Course Officer. Figures in **RED** are for non-BAF members

**DOCUMENTATION**

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

Key Teaching Points Foil	}	.....£7.35 ( <b>£9.45</b> ) each
Key Teaching Points Epee		
Key Teaching Points Sabre		
Key Coaching Points Foil		
Key Coaching Points Epee		
Key Coaching Points Sabre		
Glossary of Terms (including Translation of Fencing Terms).....		£7.35 ( <b>£9.45</b> )
Employment Guidelines.....		£7.35 ( <b>£9.45</b> )
Teaching/ Coaching Tactics (2nd Edition).....		<b>£16.80 (£21)</b>
CD-Rom Issue 5 – this contains all the syllabuses and current questions for BAF examinations, as well as other examination material.....		<b>£10.00 **</b>
Examples of past written Papers – for the Advanced and Diploma examinations - <b>FREE</b> - apply to Course Officer		

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\*\* 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 Combes ([iacombes@btinternet.com](mailto:iacombes@btinternet.com))



## THE PRESIDENT WRITES.....



### *Fencing, the Olympics and Coaching*

Well, until the Men's Team Foil event, I was getting very depressed about what I was going to say in this article. Until that point, it was like watching a car wreck in slow motion. All the individual events had come and gone and GBR had won only ONE fight against a foreign fencer.

The gloom lifted a bit for me when the Men's Foil team came out and, to their credit, turned what may have been perceived as a walkover for the Italians into a real scare and capped that off by beating the French. True, the Italians may not have fenced up to their usual standard and may have been caught out by complacency, and true, the French have been having a disastrous Olympics, but a win is a win and the Foil team are to be congratulated for what they did achieve.

Nevertheless, despite all the funding, despite the benefit of all those wild cards and despite all the 'Experts' in charge, it remains a fact that these were our worst results since the modern games began.

The fencers in question had barely shaken hands before the post-mortems began on the fencing grapevine and the inevitable "This is how I think we should put things right" speeches from all and sundry.

Instead of going down that route, can I suggest we look first at what has been working for the successful nations?

#### ITALY

In 2008, just before the Beijing Olympics, I happened to be sitting beside Antonio Fiore, president of the FIS (Federazione Italiana Scherma) Medical Commission, and I took the opportunity to shamelessly pump him for information about how the Italians were going ahead, and he described a programme that boiled down to levels of funding we can only dream of and putting the coach/athlete partnership at the centre of all the decision making procedures. The job of the coach was to be entirely focused on the development of the fencer, bringing in the experts he chose (psychology, fitness, nutrition etc.) to support him in this.

Did it work? Well, in London 2012, they won all the Women's Foil individual medals and the team gold. They also won the Men's Foil Team gold, plus a handful of silver and bronze medals which puts them at the top of the fencing medals table. Even so, I'm sure they will agree with me that their results could have been better and that performance overall has slipped recently in some respects, particularly in the sabre. Seven medals may be far beyond what we could have dreamt of, but with the quality of Italian fencing, I feel they could have achieved much more.

#### KOREA

Next down the medals table came Korea, much to everyone's (misplaced) astonishment. They have been making steady progress over the years and we need to be paying much more attention to how they are doing it. It is clear that they have a good infrastructure and funding in place – you can go to the sport university there to train as a coach, and they have sent some coaches abroad to improve their skills. However, a remark from the head coach Lee Wook Jae, in a recent interview struck me deeply

***"It is Korean style. We worked very hard on footwork, to have speedy legs because our opponents are slower."***

Why did that remark have such an impact on me? Because in this country, every time we have a disappointing result, the cry goes up "We need to get foreign coaches in!" and yet here is a country where fencing was until recently relatively unknown, getting to second place on the medal tables with all home grown coaches standing by the piste.

This points to the one thing we don't do. We refuse in this country to train our fencers according to the kind of people they are. There are too many people convinced that all we need for success is to graft some foreign fencing system on to our own. No one seems to notice that it fails time and time again. We cannot overlook the cultural differences between one system of coaching and the other. I have seen an Italian coach take the épée out of his fencer's hand and hurl it across the hall in disgust because of some tiny error she had committed. I have seen Emil Beck (Germany) physically drag a world class fencer out of a venue, and send him to the bus stop with instructions to find his own way back to Germany (for the sin of being knocked out in the first round), I have seen a Russian coach punch a lad in the face for forgetting to bring a spare mask wire to weapon control, and I have seen a Chinese coach give three girls a punishing two hour warm-up of continual repetitive drills at a World Cup competition (the girls went on to finish in 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> places) It is not in the nature of the British fencer to cope well with that kind of coaching, yet all those were all world class coaches who have achieved world class results. I have also known Polish and Hungarian coaches who came here and gave up in despair because they could not get British fencers to approach the sport in the way they were used to. I am not standing in judgement over one or the other, simply stating the obvious truth that the Koreans

have used to their advantage – you need a system of coaching which understands and works with the strengths of the individuals in it.

The excuse (which I find nothing short of slanderous) is that we cannot do this because we have no home grown world class coaches. This is so often said, that many fencers take it as being true, but it is simply a symptom of the complete ignorance of the sport that pervades among the people that purport to practise and teach it. Just consider the following:

BAF Coaches with outstanding world class success

Prof. Sue Benney – Philip Marsh, Junior World Champion épée

Prof. Andrew Vincent – Jon Willis:

1<sup>st</sup> Heidenheim Pokal World Cup 2007

1<sup>st</sup> Kish Island World Cup 2010

2<sup>nd</sup> Challenge Sydney World Cup 2009

5<sup>th</sup> Glaive de Tallinn World Cup 2010

Andy Hill – who was Corrinna Lawrence's coach up to her first European medal

These are all BAF coaches, trained under the BAF system which some, who think of themselves as belonging to the higher rungs of fencing and coaching in this country, claim doesn't have any success.

With all the coach bashing that goes on during the most recent Olympic cycle it's a wonder we have anyone willing to coach. Coaches in this country are generally treated appallingly and with almost no respect. In the main they receive little of no help in any form no matter how good their fencers' results are. Example – when Jon Willis won the Heidenheim World Cup, our then Performance Director never acknowledged the achievement of Willis's British coach, Andrew Vincent. Had he done so and had Andrew Vincent been given the help and support his foreign counterparts receive in, for example, France, Italy and Germany, how much more could Jon Willis have achieved? I know that no one in British Fencing ever contacted him to ask him how he had done it or asked for his input in developing better coaching at that level

The immediate assumption on all sides that the solution to the problem would be to change our coaches just reinforced the old adage – a fencer who wins is a bl\*\*dy fine fencer, a fencer who loses has a cr\*p coach.

Consider also the Russians, who brought in the very successful French coach Christian Bauer to improve and rebuild after their fourth place ranking at Beijing. Result? Exactly the same result at London 2012. Their results were much better than ours, but not much improved by importing a foreign system. He was simply unable to reproduce the success he had had in earlier years coaching an Italian fencer.

Over the decades we have ignored the knowledge and achievements of British coaches and British Fencing

Masters and have invited numerous foreign coaches to try imposing the philosophy of their country of origin upon British fencing. The only person it appears to have worked with is Richard Kruse. However, it could be argued that Ziemowit Wojciechowski in this case had one advantage that almost no other coach of an elite fencer in this country has been allowed – he has been allowed to keep his pupil. Kruse has been working with Wojciechowski since he first picked up a sword as a 7 year old beginner. This is totally at odds with the present party line as concerns the coaching of elite fencers in this country. The fact of the matter is that as soon as a pupil starts gaining success, the first reaction of the BFA is to try to remove that pupil from the coach by any means possible, whether it be by demanding that the fencer race all over the country for squad or Academy training, or by informing the fencer that he or she 'must' work with an appointed coach or face de-selection.

I have seen this happen time and time again at all levels of the sport and rarely, if ever, has it resulted in better success for the pupil. Quite the opposite – for many, the interference of the powers that be and the changing of coaches has resulted in a disastrous plummeting of results for the fencer who can go from the top of the rankings to complete obscurity at the speed of light. Sadly, often the only person who knows and remembers is the coach he or she was taken away from.

It was interesting to see the interview with Rebecca Adlington after winning a bronze medal – she trains with her own coach at a small local swimming club, and after the Olympics, she intends to go back there. I wonder if her governing body will try to interfere.

The vast majority of coaches, both professional and amateur, do what they do for the love of the sport. Any remuneration they receive is generally out of proportion to the amount of work they do, or the training they've done. All over the country I see volunteer coaches struggling against the odds to make clubs work and I see professional coaches who have dedicated themselves to providing the best possible service to the sport and who seem to get nothing but obstacles put in their way by those who should be helping them. With the rocketing cost of fuel and venues, it is a miracle they keep going, and often it is no thanks to those at the top of fencing. Indeed, quite the reverse is often true – coaches are constantly told they must jump through this and that hoop in order to be recognised by the BFA.

So, what do we need?

I am going to suggest something very simple. To my mind, we need to start by doing the following:

Support grassroots and beginner coaches in their attempt to broaden the base from which future champions will emerge. One may often wince to see what goes on in some fencing clubs in terms of less than perfect coaching, but the fact remains that these people are getting fencers in through the door. They need to be encouraged and supported. One of the best things the national organisations could do would be to campaign to reduce

the costs of venue hire and to help coaches with the practicalities of setting up. We need to make every effort to reduce the number of obstacles and hoops in the way of setting up fencing clubs around the country.

We need to trust coaches to want the best for their fencers and help them to become the best coaches they can be. Their contribution to a fencer's success needs to be recognised and supported and the relationship between the coach and the successful fencer needs to be protected. Coaches should be given the opportunity to develop and enhance their skills without fear of undue interference and I maintain that they should be able to choose the system - BAF, BFA, or other, or any mixture of these - which suits their own needs best without being shoehorned into ANYONE's idea of what kind of coach development they need. Senior coaches should be encouraged to run courses and sessions where they can share their skills with those who want to learn, without being moaned at from the side-lines. The more coaches we have with sword in hand, in clubs, the better. Fencers vote with their feet - leave them to do that and the better coaches will succeed and hopefully the others will be motivated to work harder.

Fencers need more experience of fencing against the very best. Meeting the elite every once in a while at competitions is not enough. They need to be given opportunities to travel abroad to fence the best. Mo Farah (10,000m Gold medallist) is on record as saying that prior to the Olympics, training in Britain didn't work for him so he moved with his family to Oregon USA. Some of the top European distance runners are setting up a base in Kenya to training alongside the world's best. How often do our best fencers get to train alongside Europe's elite fencers? The answer is all too infrequently. They only really get to experience the better fencers in the world when they face them in competition

We need to encourage more coaches to attend the senior competitions in this country and abroad, if for no other reason than to watch and learn

As much as I don't like to admit it, in this country we are involved in a small sport. At every level and in every aspect of our sport there are simply too few fencers, coaches, administrators and officials etc. It's time we all started to pull in the same direction. The future of fencing in Britain depends on it. We cannot afford to be complacent - if British Swimming, in spite of its Olympic medals, now faces funding cuts and the restructuring of its coaching programme as a punishment for its 'under-performance', we have to be ready to expect some very hard times indeed.

At all levels, we have some damn fine coaches in this country, why don't we give them a chance and give them the support they so desperately need.

### ***Congratulations to our Colleagues at London 2012***

On behalf of the Academy, I would like to congratulate our fellow coaches internationally for their results at the Olympic Games. It is an incomplete list - the fact that this information is so hard to find only reflects the lack of appreciation that so many coaches receive.

Stefano Cerioni (coach of Elisa Di Francisca ITA, women's foil gold)

Giovanni Bortolaso (coach of Arriana Errigo ITA, women's foil silver)

Giulio Tommassini (coach of Valentina Vezzali ITA, women's foil bronze)

Mariusz Piasecki (father and coach of Bartosz Piasecki NOR, men's épée silver)

Somlai Bela (coach of Aron Szylagi HUN, men's sabre gold)

Leonardo Caserta (coach of Diego Occhiuzzi ITA, men's sabre silver)

Vladimir Diatchenko (coach of Nicolay Kovalev RUS, men's sabre bronze)

Andriy Orlikovsky (coach of Yana Shemyakina UKR, women's épée gold)

Manfred Kaspar (coach of Britta Heidemann GER, women's épée silver)

Yong Yul Kim (coach of Kim Jiyeon KOR, women's sabre gold)

Dmitry Glotov (coach of Sofya Velikaya RUS, women's sabre silver)

Stefano Cerioni for the men's and women's foil team gold

Oleg Matseichuk for the men's team foil silver JPN

Daniel Levavasseur for the women's team épée gold CHN

Shim Jaesung and Lee Wook Jae for the achievements of the Korean team - bronze for men's individual foil and épée, gold for men's team sabre, gold for women's individual sabre, women's team épée silver and women's team foil bronze.

Roberto Sobalvarro for the women's team épée bronze USA

Ulrich Schreck (coach of Peter Joppich GER, men's foil team bronze)

*Philip Bruce*

## **CONGRATULATIONS - 1**

Academy News wishes to congratulate Philip Bruce and Isobel Combes, who were married in July.

Isobel will continue to use the surname Combes, for professional reasons, but has adopted Bruce as one of her forenames.

## **CONGRATULATIONS - 2**

At the recent Congress of the Académie d'Armes Internationale (AAI), Professor Philip Bruce was elected as a Vice President of the AAI.

# PROFESSOR JAMES PERRY

1946 -2012



Professor Jim Perry was involved in a road accident on the 13th July, whilst on his way to teach one of his school classes, and died at the scene.

Jim will be remembered as a larger than life character - as well as his work in fencing, he had been a professional ski-instructor, Arctic warfare, survival and adventure training instructor and mountain expedition leader. The BAF has received several tributes and Academy News has selected two to try to illustrate the wide spectrum of those who will miss Jim. One is from a coaching colleague, whilst the other is from the parent of one of his pupils.

*From Prof. Bob Bales*

I knew Jim for many years from the time he first started attending coach education courses at the old Mayfield College days. Right from the start he began to demonstrate all the skills of a top professional coach. He was very organised in his work and training, showing independence of thought, yet always ready to listen. The other side of Jim was one of enjoying life, his love of skiing, the odd whisky and a joke. Jim receiving a sabre lesson with a hangover was quite funny for the coach!!

I got the impression all his pupils received 100% from Jim and I am sure along with myself and his fencing friends, colleagues, and pupils he will be greatly missed and fondly remembered. My thoughts are with his family at this sad time.

*From Alienora Taylor*

My son's Fencing teacher was killed last week. We only discovered this, via a tiny article in a local paper, yesterday, and it has been a huge shock.

And I can only imagine how unutterably dreadful it must be for his family and close friends. To them, I send heartfelt condolences.

But my purpose in writing this post is to pay tribute to a remarkable man.

We first met Jim - as everyone called him - on February 23rd 2005, when our then tiny, serious-faced, seven year old joined a fencing club in a neighbouring school. Right from that first lesson, Jim had the measure of our doughty little lad: though tiniest in the class, the boy would, and regularly did, go up against hulking great twelve year old brutes and though he did not always win, he hung in there like an irritating little terrier. And Jim was always there with an encouraging word, his mighty laugh and his rapier gaze.

Like our child, Jim was left-handed - a potential advantage in the fencing world where, statistically, most fencers are righties - and this gave them an early bond which endured over the next seven and a half years.

Jim was firm but kind: the children always knew where they stood with him; they knew instinctively not to cross the line - but, if one of his 'littlies' as he called them, showed signs of nerves or distress, Jim would be on hand to have a quiet word, to give a reassuring smile.

The lad progressed in leaps and bounds, particularly once he had settled on his weapon of choice, the Sabre, and, with Jim's help, he gained all five of his Stars. Jim also trusted him to coach other, less experienced fencers - and I believe that this helped the boy's self-confidence and assertiveness enormously.

Jim regularly came into various local schools - including the one I used to teach at - to teach Fencing. He was an inspiration: the most difficult pupils responded to his calm, fair approach and I witnessed some remarkable transformations, during the course of a day, in which challenging teens were given space to be, just for a few hours, the heroes of their own dreams.

I now have a rich vocabulary of Fencing terms - and will not be able to hear, 'En garde!' for example, without also hearing the echo of Jim's distinctive voice.

I am not ashamed to admit that I spent much of yesterday afternoon crying after hearing the news; our son is devastated - and I am quite sure there are fencers all over the land, and of all ages, whose lives feel a little less bright today as a result.

Some people are irreplaceable - and Jim was one of them. The world will be a poorer place without him.



# STEPHEN DOUGLAS ROBERT SEAGER

1922-2012

*Steve Seager, a former member of the Academy and who served on its committee, died earlier this year. This obituary has been adapted from a tribute written by Professor Davis Austin, who was first persuaded to take on a committee appointment by Steve.*



Steve as he was affectionately known to his friends, was born in Scotland but moved to Streatham, London as a small boy and grew up attending Streatham School from whence followed an award of a sports scholarship to Dulwich College, a school renowned for its fencing. He excelled at a number of sports including swimming, athletics, riding, shooting, engaging in fencing more seriously in later life.

In his late teens he joined a firm of solicitors but his training was interrupted in 1940 when he was called up. He fought in North Africa, Sicily and Italy, before being wounded. He was mentioned in dispatches. On his recovery he was recruited for Force 133, part of the Special Operations Service and SOE, forerunner of the SAS, and was parachuted behind the German enemy lines into Greece where he remained working with the resistance for 2 years.

After the war he moved into the building trade, first with his father's company and then with Ready Mix Concrete as Regional Sales Manager.

Steve, in his spare time, reintroduced himself to his interest in fencing and joined Salle Behmber. After some competition success, he turned to coaching and Professor Reggie Behmber sponsored him to join the B.A.F., in which he was later to serve on the Committee. He started his own club – Southside – which duly had success in Surrey, one pupil going on to compete in the Olympics. Around this time he took over as coach at the Toynby Hall Group in London and met and married in 1960 Pam who had joined the club to learn fencing. I would suggest respectfully, a marriage “made in fencing heaven” which lasted until the end.

He continued coaching fencing into his fifties, supporting many events including helping with sponsorship the Fencing Masters World Championships at Crystal Palace in 1970.

Steve Seager was a party animal. He was abundant in enthusiasm for fun and living life to the full. He always had time for others, an unfailing friend and he was blessed with a sociable disposition, frequently tinged with good humoured wit and wickedness. He was a rare talent in his professional work. Above all he loved his family.

## THE WALLACE COLLECTION

*A Review by Bob Merry*

In this and the previous issue there has been a notice on page 11 about an exhibition at the Wallace Collection in London. Is it worth visiting, you may ask? Well, I have travelled down to the capital to see it, so here are my views.



The Wallace Collection is housed at Hertford House, a large mansion on the north side of Manchester Square, a few minutes walk from Bond Street Tube station. It is a magnificent collection of art, furniture and arms & armour, from mediaeval times up to the nineteenth century. The temporary exhibition “The Noble Art of the Sword: Fashion and Fencing in Renaissance Europe” occupies a few rooms in the basement and the organisers have gathered together a fine collection of weapons, clothing, books and other exhibits from around the world. They range from practice swords, with protective “buttons” the size of squash balls, to a rapier once owned by the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II, with a hilt fashioned from solid gold (photo, left). There are also original editions of the works of famous masters, such as Thibault,

Camillo Agrippa, di Grassi and many others. The exhibition continues until the 16<sup>th</sup> September and is highly recommended.

Even if you miss this exhibition, the Wallace Collection is still worth a visit in its own right. It has a first class collection of art, furniture and porcelain, but it is perhaps of more interest to us for the three large rooms full of arms and armour, both European and Oriental. Outside of the Royal Armouries, I doubt you will find a better collection in this country and it rivals many larger museums worldwide, such as New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. If the day of my midweek visit was anything to go by, it also has the advantage of not being overcrowded.

In my opinion this exhibition and the Wallace Collection are well worth a special trip and, if you are in London anyway, why not go there and see for yourself. It's free!





# ***SWORDSMEN OF THE SILVER SCREEN - PT 1***

*By Andy Wilkinson*

When Hollywood first looked towards the big skies and deep blue waters of the Spanish Main, the forests of Sherwood and the Royal Courts of Europe to create what we all remember as 'The Swashbucklers' of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the Hollywood Studios immediately knew they needed experts in the field of fencing and swordsmanship to realise the vision of their screen writers.

The climatic sword-fight was common place on the stage. Actors would rehearse for weeks before a performance and would fight unprotected, using swords, which although blunted, were quite capable of causing injury. But what of film fights?

It soon became clear that filmed fights would require far more attention to detail, as the camera would expose poorly choreographed and executed moves. Unrealistic phrases or a lack of intent or danger from the actors would be clearly seen by the audience close up on a screen 30 feet high! It was obvious to the producers that their film stars would require just as many weeks of training and rehearsal, often to metronome timing under the guidance of Fencing Masters.

And so it was, when a film was stepped up from development to pre-production it was not uncommon for the Fencing Master to be hired before the film's director!



Picture Credit: "The Three Musketeers" 1921 ~ Douglas Fairbanks Pictures

As the author and historian Jeffery Richards states in his marvellous book 'Swordsmen of The Screen' (Routledge & Kegan Paul ISBN 0 7100 0681 0) :

*.....'In the annals of swashbuckling films, four names stand out, four men who between them have been responsible for most of the screen sword duels ~ Henry J Uttenhove, Fred Cavens, Ralph Faulkner and Jean Heremans'.*

These fight directors, to people like me who have studied their work and films for nearly 30 years, are the true unsung heroes of Hollywood. Unlike the celebrity culture of today, these Masters were uncredited on the films they worked on; think of a Hollywood Swashbuckler and I can guarantee you one of these fight directors would have been responsible for the swordplay'. Without them, Errol Flynn, Louis Hayward, Douglas Fairbanks, Basil Rathbone, Robert Douglas and many more movie stars of that era would never have won the day, saved the princess or drawn cutlasses against pirates on the Spanish Main!

In this occasional series of articles I will hope to give an insight into the Hollywood Fight Directors, their techniques, philosophy and their films. I will also highlight the many actors who flourished under their tuition, such as the great Basil Rathbone and of course Errol Flynn.

Until the next time ~

*And still of a winter's night, they say  
When the wind is in the trees  
When the Moon is a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas  
When the road is a ribbon of moonlight  
Over the purple moor  
A highwayman comes riding-riding-riding  
A highwayman comes riding up to the old inn door*

Alfred Noyes, The Highwayman

Have fun and be safe!

## WORSLEY'S WORDS

Musings from your Members' Rep.



By the time you read this article, the Olympic games will be over and the results, for better or worse will be known. As it happens, the results for British fencers were possibly disappointing, although I suspect not a complete surprise. I don't want to go down the route of dissecting the events that took place, what did we do right? What went wrong? Whose fault is it? I'll leave that to be thrashed out elsewhere.

What I would like to focus on is the publicity factor the Olympic Games have provided for our sport. This has been one of the most televised Games ever held; the BBC have provided all the sports with significant amounts of "air-time". Although those of us with access to Freeview only, will have found the amount of televised fencing a little limited, I believe that anyone with Sky had access to virtually all of the fencing as it happened. Regardless of results, this has been a golden opportunity to bring fencing to the attention of the general public and from my own experience this has certainly been the case. As I mentioned in my first article I'm a chemist by day, coach by night. Most of the people I work with know I fence and although I have spoken to one or two about fencing in some depth and how I started, it's rarely mentioned other than in passing. However for the whole of the week that the fencing events were broadcast there wasn't a day where I didn't have to answer questions on all sorts of aspects of fencing, from what's the difference between foil and épée? Why does sabre look so much faster than the other weapons? How can you tell what is happening? How does team fencing work? This set me thinking, if there is this level of interest and curiosity about fencing (now that it has been seen on television) where I work, then what's happening across the country? If the Olympic games have raised the profile of our sport then how can we capitalise on this? If anyone has any suggestions let me know because I'm really struggling to find an answer.

To help illustrate the point I'm trying to make, here's an example. The weekend the Olympics started, I did a fencing demonstration on the Sunday at a small well dressing festival at Chadkirk Chapel, a country park just outside Stockport. Just a simple affair, demonstrations of all three weapons, explanations of the differences between them, the basic rules of fencing etc. I had prepared a notice board with information about fencing, all the usual stuff - how it started, the weapons, the rules, and the swords. I even prepared a simple profile of all the Team GB Fencers that were in action at the Olympics. And you know what? People really seemed to enjoy it; after each of our 20-minute demonstrations, people came over to the stall we were based in and asked all sorts of questions. We gave away scores of handouts about my own club, other clubs in the local area, how to get started in fencing, where to buy equipment. But the one thing that sticks in my mind about the whole event is the number of times that people said, "Fencing! I've always wanted to have a go at fencing, but I've never been able to find anywhere that does it". Despite the fact that there were two fencing clubs in the immediate area and one more about a 30 minute drive away. Either people are just being kind, or fencing is the most well known minority sport in the country; everyone you speak to wants to have a go but can't find a club.

So what do we do? As I said before, any suggestions? - let me know, because I don't think there is a simple answer to this problem. One thing I know for sure is that people have short memories. If we are going to use these Games as a springboard to raise the profile of our sport, then we need to act sooner rather than later. Once the excitement of the Games has passed, then most of the minority sports featured will fade from the minds of the public. I personally believe that it is not up to the "Sport" per se to do something but rather it is each individual club that has to take action, hence the plea for suggestions. If there are clubs out there that actively promote fencing in their local areas, I would like to hear from you. I'd like to hear about how you go about doing it and, if possible, I'd like to share these ideas with the rest of the membership.

Please remember I'm here to put your questions to the committee. If you have any questions you would like to ask me or if you have any comments about the above please don't hesitate to contact me at [worsleyja@aol.com](mailto:worsleyja@aol.com) or on 07857 625 958. Anonymity guaranteed unless otherwise requested.

*John Worsley, Members' Representative.*

Oh yes – the second most common question I heard on the demonstration day was "The épée, that's the one that appears in all the crosswords isn't it?" (Deep breath, grit teeth, and smile nicely).

## **MORE USEFUL BITS.....**

### **BAF RESIDENTIAL COURSEs**

## **Autumn Course - 29th October to 2nd November 2012**

### Fees for the Course

**£406 for Members and £466 for non-Members**

**Please Note - An additional administration fee of £40 will be charged for bookings made in the final 28 days, so please make sure you book before the 1st October to avoid this fee.**

**Course to be held at Denstone College, Staffordshire.**

**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.*

### **The Noble Art of the Sword: Fashion and Fencing in Renaissance Europe**

**Thursday 17th May, 2012 - Sunday 16th September, 2012**

**Price: Admission Free**

"These murderous objects are exquisitely beautiful" Erica Wagner, *The Times*

"Once you've seen this show, I guarantee you will never think about the Renaissance in quite the same way again" Richard Dormant, *The Telegraph*

"...objects of breathtaking beauty that will stop you in your tracks" Richard Dormant, *The Telegraph*

We are grateful to Austen Rose for drawing our attention to the above exhibition at the Wallace Collection, Hertford House, Manchester Square, London W1U 3BN.

Further details can be found at <http://www.wallacecollection.org/collections/exhibition/93>



### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Photographs in this issue have been supplied by Bob Merry (p1 & 8 (Wallace Collection)), Jacqui Perry (p7), and David Austin (p8 (Steve Seager))

## **MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS**

The under mentioned names are published as having applied for membership of the British Academy of Fencing. If anyone wishes to raise objections or has information which he or she feels is relevant, please contact the Secretary of the BAF.

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

<b>James Baldwin</b>	<b>Surrey</b>
<b>Laura Jamieson</b>	<b>Aberdeen</b>
<b>Sarah Dolan</b>	<b>Ruthin</b>
<b>Andrew Docherty</b>	<b>Hemel Hempstead</b>

See the Academy web site at [www.baf-fencing.org](http://www.baf-fencing.org) for details of the latest applications.

## **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.***



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