

# British Academy of Fencing **ACADEMY NEWS**



**February 2013**  
**Issue 69**

**"Run by coaches for coaches"**

## JUST REWARDS

At the recent Dinner following the AGM, a number of presentations were made. The two main awards were the Gauthier Trophy and the Brian Pitman Memorial Award.

The Gauthier Trophy was presented to the Academy in 1973 by J Emrys Lloyd OBE, in memory of his former fencing Master, Capitaine André Gauthier. The proposal Emrys accepted at the time read, "At the behest of the BAF Committee, the Gauthier Trophy should be awarded to a Master of the Academy whose work greatly benefited the sport of fencing in the United Kingdom. The chosen recipient should receive the Trophy at the Annual Dinner of the Academy in the year following the Summer Olympics and hold it for a period of four years." The Gauthier Trophy is acknowledged to be the Academy's most prestigious award. This year, following a proposal by Professors Leon Hill MBE



*Leon Hill presents the Gauthier Trophy to Philip Bruce*

and Tom Etchells, it was awarded to our President, Professor Philip Bruce. The presentation was made by Professor Hill, who has held the Gauthier Trophy himself for the past four years, and, in doing so, gave the following citation:

*Philip Bruce has held the office of President of the British Academy of Fencing for the last 10 years and is he is entirely dedicated and totally committed to his responsibilities and duties as President.*

*Under his leadership the organisation runs openly and smoothly - befitting the status of such an organisation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This is a remarkable achievement for a self-financing organisation which, unlike British Fencing, receives no financial support from the Government or indeed from any external source.*

*He has been the prime motivator in ensuring that the Academy continues to provide a well-documented Coach Education Scheme, supported by courses and examinations. All coaches - both members and non-members - now have a pathway to qualify as highly as their ambitions and abilities permit.*

*For 12 years he has been a tutor on the staff of every official Academy Course. He has directed the majority of these courses himself but, recognising the danger of becoming indispensable as course director, he has unselfishly stepped back and encouraged other masters to acquire the experience of directing the course.*

*...continued on page 5*

### IN THIS ISSUE

<i>Useful Info.....</i>	<i>p 3</i>
<i>President Writes.....</i>	<i>p 4</i>
<i>Q &amp; A.....</i>	<i>p 6</i>
<i>Letters.....</i>	<i>p 7</i>
<i>Letter from America.....</i>	<i>p 8</i>
<i>Worsley's Words.....</i>	<i>p 9</i>
<i>AGM.....</i>	<i>p 10</i>
<i>Photos from the AGM.....</i>	<i>p 11</i>

**NEXT ISSUE: May 2013**

**Contributions by April 10th,  
please**



evolve



The "Evolution" handle  
The worlds first customizable grip  
[www.leonpaul.com](http://www.leonpaul.com) / 0845 3888 8132

 **Leon Paul & sugru**  
London

**YOUR COMMITTEE**

**President:**

Prof. Philip Bruce  
190 Ashurst Road  
Peel Hall, Manchester M22 5AZ  
Tel: 0161 498 6625  
Email: [pbruce.baf@btinternet.com](mailto:pbruce.baf@btinternet.com)

**Vice-President:**

Prof. Peter Northam  
28 Dorset Road  
Edgbaston, Birmingham B17 8EN  
Tel: 0121 429 9717  
Email: [prof.pnortham.baf@btinternet.com](mailto:prof.pnortham.baf@btinternet.com)

**Vice-President:**

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

**Secretary:**

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

**Treasurer:**

Stuart Clough  
1 Yew Tree Cottages  
Brown Street  
Old Newton, Stowmarket IP14 4QB  
Tel: 07886 708392  
Email: [baf@stuartclough.co.uk](mailto:baf@stuartclough.co.uk)

**Assistant Secretary and Course Officer:**

Provost Dave Jerry  
Orchard Rise, Churchtown  
Belton, Doncaster DN9 1PE  
Tel: 01427 874109  
email: [david.jerry@free.newsurf.net](mailto:david.jerry@free.newsurf.net)

**Members' Representative:**

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

**Proficiency Awards Administrator:**

Maitre Donald Walker  
4 The Aviaries  
Castle Howard  
York YO60 7BU  
email: [maitredcwalker@aol.com](mailto:maitredcwalker@aol.com)

**Additional Committee Appointments:**

**Chairman, SSTT:**  
Prof. Leon Hill

**International Secretary:**  
Prof. Philip Bruce

**Child Protection Officer, Welfare Officer:**  
Prof. Louisa Miller

**Chairman, Disciplinary Sub-Committee**  
Prof. Peter Northam

**Editor - Academy News, Insurance, Examination Results Coordinator:**  
Prof. Bob Merry

**Membership Secretary:**  
Stuart Clough

**Film & Theatre Representative:**  
Andy Wilkinson  
The Cottage, The Common  
Kinsbourne Green  
Harpenden, Herts. AL5 3NT  
Tel: 01582 713052  
email: [andyawilkinson@hotmail.com](mailto:andyawilkinson@hotmail.com)

**USEFUL INFORMATION**

**ACADEMY WEB SITE**

**FOR ALL THE LATEST INFORMATION AND MERCHANDISING GO TO THE ACADEMY WEB SITE AT [WWW.BAF-FENCING.ORG](http://WWW.BAF-FENCING.ORG)**



**RECOMMENDED RATES OF PAY**

Level	Rate
Diploma	37.75
Maitre d'Esgrime and Provost	30.35
Member	25.00
Associate	22.35

Please Note: These rates are given for guidance only. Coaches are free to negotiate their own rates, according to local conditions. The Academy recommends that travel, up to 20 miles from home, should be included in the basic fee.

**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

**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

**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		

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](mailto:iacombes@btinternet.com))

## THE PRESIDENT WRITES.....



### *AGM – January 2013*

Once again, this year's AGM and Dinner was held at the Warwick Hilton and was organised by Prof. Louisa Miller. The AGM was one of the best attended for some time. On behalf of the committee and the membership, I should like to congratulate Louisa on a job well done in organising both the AGM and the Dinner.

I opened the AGM with a brief tribute in respect of the loss of Profs Roy Goodall, Ken Pearson and Jim Perry. The AGM then observed one minute's silence.

Overall the AGM went well with all the annual reports being accepted without issue. In addition to the general routine, the following proposals were put to and accepted by the AGM:

- To incorporate the Academy as a limited company by guarantee
- To change the articles in light of the above
- To transfer the assets of the Academy from an associate to the company

Other notable business was

- a unanimous vote of thanks to Leon Hill who retired as Chairman of the SSTT
- the committee also received a vote of thanks for its work during the year
- Jon Daly was presented with a Level 3 coaching certificate and an AAI Prevot in Sabre
- Welsh Fencing
  - \* Welsh Fencing and the British Academy of Fencing have agreed to join forces in the delivery of a mutually agreed package of coach education and qualification of coaches throughout Wales.
  - \* Welsh Fencing will continue to deliver the current 'in house' Level One which is based on BAF principles but adapted to the needs of Welsh coaches.
  - \* From July 2013, the BAF will take responsibility for the delivery of Levels 2 – 5 throughout Wales. Subject to demand, the BAF will run a variety of courses, including 5 day courses in North Wales and a 2 day Coaches Conference in Cardiff.
  - \* The point of contact for all Welsh coaching matters will be, in the first place, Welsh Fencing.

The AGM elected the following to the committee:

Vice Presidents	Profs Louisa Miller and Peter Northam
Secretary	Prof. Bob Merry
Assistant Secretary	Dave Jerry
Treasurer	Stuart Clough
Members' Rep	John Worsley
Proficiency Awards Administrator	Donald Walker

At our annual dinner I had the privilege and honour of presenting:

- Certificates for Diploma and AAI Maitre d'Escrime (Sabre) to John Worsley
- Certificates for Advanced and AAI Prévost Certificate (Epée) to Paul Williams
- The Brian Pitman Trophy to Tony Klenczar

I was also very privileged myself to be awarded the Gauthier Trophy. In accepting the trophy I paid tribute to Leon Hill, Tom Etchells, Geoff Hawksworth and Vic Cassapi, each of whom played a significant part in teaching/coaching/mentoring and developing me as a coach. On a personal note, I should like to offer my most sincerely thanks to Leon and Tom for nominating me and the committee for gifting the trophy.

*Philip Bruce*

*...from front page*

*His firm belief that sword-in-hand skills are an essential requirement of a good fencing coach has been vindicated by the fact that the Academy's Residential Courses are internationally admired for their excellence. This is evidenced by the numbers of foreign students who now attend them and who value this emphasis on practical skills.*

*He writes an article for publication in every edition of the Academy Newsletter. These articles help to keep members in touch with the work of the Committee. They also often include an effective defence of the Academy against vindictive rumours.*

*For 12 years he has been an indispensable member of the Standing Sub-committee for Technique and Terminology.*

- *He has attended every single meeting, which were initially held weekly, but more recently fortnightly.*
- *He has shouldered more than his fair share of tabling the first draft of new documents that are then extensively reviewed by the sub-committee through at least five drafts. His particular skill being that of drafting papers with a tabular or graphical format. He offered the first draft of all the flowcharts in the Booklet 'Teaching and Coaching Tactics'.*

*Professor Bruce's history of service to the sport of fencing is not limited to the period of his Presidency of the Academy and his previous service as a Committee Member and Treasurer. He has an impressive record of service to the sport extending well before that.*

- *At a time when an amateur status was important, he was the first amateur to pass the Academy's Diploma Examination and to remain an amateur for several years. He thus enjoyed the unique status as an Amateur Master of the Academy – setting a precedent and thus opening a pathway others could follow.*
- *During the period of his amateur status:*
  - *he was, for a few years, a member of the Board of British Fencing (then known as the Amateur Fencing Association).*
  - *he was coach and captain to the England Team in the Annual Quadrangular Matches*
  - *perhaps one of his most impressive accomplishments was that of quite brilliantly organising and supervising what was probably the best ever Commonwealth Fencing Championships. This spectacular event was held in Manchester in 1990.*

*Although it is seldom acknowledged by fencing's Governing Body, there can be no doubt that it is the work of fencing coaches that keeps the sport of fencing alive in Britain. The majority and best of these coaches are members of our Academy, most ably led by its President, Philip Bruce.*

*Bearing all this in mind, Philip Bruce is most worthy of becoming the recipient of the Gauthier Trophy for the period 2012 to 2016.*

It was obvious to those present at the Dinner that the honour meant a lot to Philip, as he made an emotional speech of thanks, in which he praised a number of people who had influenced his fencing career; Leon Hill, Tom Etchells, Geoff Hawksworth and Vic Cassapi.



*Tony Klenczar receives the Brian Pitman Memorial Award*

As you may have read in John Worsley's column in the previous issue of Academy News, the Brian Pitman Memorial Award is presented to an Academy coach who has made a significant contribution in the field of coaching young fencers. This year's winner was Anthony ('Tony') Klenczar, The nomination came from the Wingerworth Fencing Club in Derbyshire and gave details of how Tony has, over a number of year's, taken the club from the point of collapse to one with thriving adult and junior sections. He has also formed other junior clubs and has organised a number of competitions in the area. His time and enthusiasm have been given freely. The nomination can be summed up in one paragraph from the citation:

*"What I see in Tony is a person that gives his time freely asking nothing in return. I have seen him recently sat on the sideline just watching the fights, the coaching and the socialising; this is his reward. From a personal point of view*

*I would have to say that fencing has enriched my life for the better and this would have never have come about if Tony hadn't possessed so much enthusiasm, determination and drive to make things happen. All this with a smile on his face, never seeing the negatives only the positives, I really do take my hat off to him."*

Academy News congratulates Philip and Tony, as well as all those receiving certificates at the AGM.

## QUESTION & ANSWER

*In his report (page 9) about what occurred at the Members' meeting prior to the AGM, John Worsley comments on the feeling that articles from other than Masters of the Academy were unlikely to be published in Academy News and were therefore not submitted. In fact, nearly every article that has been submitted, from whatever source, has been published and it is my personal opinion that it is always possible to learn more about our sport and the coaching of it from many sources, including other coaches, of whatever level, and pupils. If nothing else, this diversity of views will stimulate discussion and make the process of coach education a two-way system, with coach educators gaining as well as giving. Here we print a question and the answer supplied by David Kirby, in the hope that it will stimulate further contributions in a similar vein. If you have an opinion to add to this, do not hesitate to contact me. Bob Merry (Editor, Academy News).*

### *The Question:*

I am a level 4 foil coach and have been coaching for approximately 45 years. I recently had a discussion with a young fencer who had been on a personal performance course. During the course he was informed that, when executing a lateral parry of quarte, the hand should roll on completion of the parry. When I viewed a video of a Hungarian coach, his pupil also rolled the hand during the parry of quarte. I find no difficulty in maintaining the position of the thumb at approximately "one o'clock to one thirty" when parrying quarte and the subsequent riposte, so therefore I have taught this practice all of my coaching career.

My logic for not advocating the rolling of the hand is that the practice often encourages beginners to over rotate on completion of the quarte parry. I am open to new ideas, providing there is a good logical reason for them. Could someone enlighten, me one way or another?

### *The Answer:*

In my experience there are as many different "ways" of executing a move as there are Fencing Masters present! However, there is generally an accepted way of performing each action, which is usually based on empirical research - i.e. those that did it right, lived, and those who didn't removed themselves from the gene pool. So what we are left with is the distillation of that knowledge.

Various countries, England included (I deliberately use England here, (a) because this is about the Henry VIII period, and (b) I am an England Fencing Coach Educator), developed styles and actions, which suited the weapons or tactics that prevailed there. So the French went for foil/rapier-like weapons, thrusting, highly technical ones, with the imperative to keep the point of the weapon covering the target; the Hungarians for a more robust approach, with no less technicality, but favouring the cut and thrust of the sabre of the Magyars. The former, French system, brought into Great Britain by Roger Crosnier just after WW2 would have a quarte parry with the thumb in exactly the same position as in Sixte, "In executing the parries of quarte and sixte, the hand and the blade maintain their original position." (see Crosnier, R. (1951), p.98). So there is NO roll of the hand there... However, Crosnier also says, "The old school taught that in executing simple parries the hand was rotated from supination to pronation when crossing from sixte to quarte." (Crosnier (1951), p.79). So: the 'old' way is to rotate and the 'new' way is not to.

Lukovich would have you roll your hand slightly outwards into quarte, so that "...the point may deviate outside the horizontal line from the eye about one hand-width." (Lukovich, I. (1986) p.122). He then goes on to describe the various ripostes that may be made. So that is the Hungarian system – roll the hand slightly.

The BAF teaching is that of Crosnier, saying that in making a lateral parry of quarte the fencer should keep the "hand - in three-quarter supination" with the same applying to the parry of sixte (Bruce et al. (2011) p.18). That great Master, Szabo, sums it up nicely: "It is wrong to take a rigid stand in support of either system. Both are needed and therefore both have to be taught and applied." But applied by an understanding Master and as tactically appropriate! (Szabó, L. (1977) p.238).

So to answer your question, the rolling or not is a French-Hungarian system issue (at least in UK) and you can use either, as long as each are used (a) tactically correctly and (b) as part of the system they derive from, and (c) with the correct ripostes following. No doubt the Italians, Germans, Russians and other would have a comment, too, but that will do for now. As Szabo says, there is no 'correct' system, but there is a correct way of executing a move and that is whatever wins your fencer the point, the coach their reputation, and contentment all round.

### *Bibliography:*

- (Crosnier, 1951), (Lukovich, 1986), (Bruce et al., 2011), (Szabó, 1977)  
 Bruce, P., Etechells, T., Hill, L. and Vincent, A. (2011) **A Compendium of the Theory and Practice of Teaching and Coaching Fencing**. Manchester: BAF.  
 Crosnier, R. (1951) **Fencing with the Foil**. Plymouth: Latimer Trend & Co.  
 Lukovich, I. (1986) **Fencing - the modern international style**. Staten Island: SKA Swordplay Books.  
 Szabó, L. (1977) **Fencing and the Master**. Staten Island: SKA Swordplay Books.

# Letters

*From Nigel Carter*

I was a bit disappointed by Dave Jerry's article in November's Academy News.

He starts by confessing that he is "no great fan of GoFence", and then claims that it "stops at the first hurdle", without explaining what that hurdle is.

However his article goes on to describe a scheme "to progress beyond the plastic" and as a "follow on to GoFence". Significantly, he does not advocate throwing out GoFence altogether and his penultimate sentence admits that his clients "have laid some foundation via the GoFence scheme."

Can I give my assessment of "plastic fencing"? I first encountered plastic fencing about three years ago and persuaded the club that I was then with to buy four plastic foils and masks. The children, who had already been learning to fence for a few weeks, welcomed the kit as a novelty - but soon tired of it. I felt unimpressed.

However, after watching a day's fencing at the Excel arena during the Olympics, I took time to watch the Midi fence equipment being demonstrated with a random bunch of children. A few weeks later I bought a GoFence (Pro) set of equipment from Leon Paul. Having got this kit, I put on a number of free taster days for a few Primary schools. Children from Reception, (aged 4-5) and Year 1 to Year 6 (aged 6-11) took part. All children seemed to enjoy themselves, but (to date), only two 'after-school' fencing clubs have resulted.

In my opinion the designers have attempted to target too wide an age range. The foam swords (Mini-Fence) are intended for 6-8 year olds, but although the swords are extremely light the handles are too large for the tiny hands that are expected to wield them. I basically threw these away after my first experiment - and resorted to the plastic (Midi-Fence) kit, thereafter - even for children as young as six.

I have found the Midi-Fence kit can work for 7 to 11 year olds - but I cannot imagine using it for children any older and I actually move to conventional equipment for 10 years plus. The designers seem to have fallen between two stools with this system. Although it is stated as aimed at 8 - 15 year olds, the swords are of a weight to suit the youngest (although the handles are still on the large side) but the bibs, or vests, are clearly for much older children. When used by these, the plastic sword is nowhere near robust enough, and soon assumes a ridiculous curvature. Returning to the younger children; for them the plastic sword is comparatively rigid, but the sponge insert to the bibs is nowhere near thick enough to prevent bruising from a simple thrust, even before the swords develop any curvature.

To summarize, the kit is useful for me in conducting after-school sessions in State primary schools. It is convenient enough to carry in a small car - and just about affordable. These schools are generally catering for the less well off parents, and would be unlikely to afford it for themselves. Buying conventional (full) fencing equipment for a group of twelve or so youngsters would be quite out of the question for them, and me! After an academic year's course I would hope the children would be in a position to decide whether to seek out a regular fencing club, having at least learnt the rudiments of the sport.

*Nigel Carter*

*From Prof. Peter Northam*

I was talking to a Fencing Master recently, at a fencing competition. We chatted about various things but during the conversation he asked, "how do you become a coach educator?" After a few moments thought, I said, "you are a Fencing Master; ipso facto, you are a coach educator."

This led me on to thinking about our present coach education system. I remember running coaching courses years ago, to qualify fencers into coaches and coaches into better coaches. But now, less of this is happening, and it's because our present scheme is a lot different than it was.

I firmly believe that our new coach education scheme is a solid and reliable product. Well thought out, logical, interesting, challenging, and relevant! And with a rigorous exam to pass, what you now get is a very good coach. My main point though, is to say to all Academy coaches, "this is your product, you own it, take it and run courses." Make sure though, that you are up to date with the scheme. There is plenty of help and documentation available.

As a matter of courtesy please let our course officer know you're running a course as it will help in a number of ways:

The Academy will advertise your course

It might help in courses not clashing

It will help in knowing as and when you require examiners

The examination follows a set pattern, as it always has, and wise is the coach who trains a future coach to follow that set pattern.

There can be no greater satisfaction than to train coaches and see them pass the Academy exam.

*Peter Northam*

# Letter from America

*From Bret Gantry*

I've had a very busy time since the Olympics and it was quite nice to run into so many fellow fencers and coaches during the four interesting days I spent immersed in watching our sport at the Excel centre. Like so many others, I can honestly say that I've never seen fencing so well presented. It was really nice to see so many familiar fencing faces from Denstone and other places to catch up and say farewell before I boarded the plane for my new job in the USA. Teaching physics at the British School in Houston has kept me very busy and I have rarely paused since I got off the plane in August. Fencing has kept me sane(ish).

I did check that I could continue fencing before I agreed to move to Houston, but I've been really lucky in finding a new fencing club here. Alliance Fencing Academy, run by head coach Andrey Geva, is quite near to my school and very, very competitive. There are a lot of highly-ranked and very capable juniors and senior fencers of both genders in every age group, which is exceptional. The salle has free fencing and both individual and class lessons, offered six days a week. Alliance is primarily an épée club, which suits me quite well, although I do miss the chance to pick up a sabre now and again.

The salle is packed every night of the week with fencers having lessons and doing a lot of free competitive practice. Unlike most fencing clubs in the UK, which use a multipurpose gym, the space is set out for fencing with eight permanent electric pistes and purpose built facilities. I always enjoyed fencing in the UK, but it is really nice to train in a dedicated facility. It makes a difference to the atmosphere when you walk in the door. For most of the night, there are more fencers than pistes so you have to wait to fight, but only long enough to get your breath back from the last bout and take on more water.

I spent the first couple of months just getting to the point where I could keep fighting for a couple of hours and was getting comprehensively slaughtered by many of the others until well into October. However, I am pleased to say that I'm now having a few more evenly-matched bouts and winning a few as well. The arms race continues, but I'm in the running, as it were. There are still a lot of good fencers who regularly beat me, but they're very, very good, which is making me work hard to get better. Every point against some of them is a small victory. My fellow fencers here have all been very welcoming. They take their sport very seriously, as do lots of Americans, but there are also a lot of international fencers here including a couple of other Brits. The technical standard here is excellent, although sometimes the terminology is a little different. I usually fence two nights a week at the moment and sometimes on a Saturday afternoon, when the salle has a competitive mini-tournament where everyone fights everyone else with proper poules and DE.

I went to my first open competition here in September (just to see what it was like) and it was very different from the opens I attended in the UK. I was allowed to enter on the day and sign up for US Fencing insurance at the venue, unlike the usual advance entry requirements in the UK. There were about 80 fencers of various standards including some very good competitors. The organisation was much more stringent and formal than a UK competition. I've never before had a weapon tested at every bout, or had a proper referee from the first match of the poule. Fortunately, the rules are the same, even though I was told that I had to come on guard in sixte with my point up for the referee to start play. Things took a while to get going, but proceeded in much the same fashion as in the UK. The worst thing about America is the size of the place - it takes ages to get anywhere. So I may have to wait until the next competition comes to Houston. At least it gives me time to improve.

I'm having lessons twice a week with coach Andrey or his two fellow professional full-time coaches, Sergey Danilov and Benoit Bouysset, who is the US Men's team coach and often travels away for coaching and competitions. When work allows me more free evenings, I'll be able to fit more fencing in. Andrey and Sergey were both trained in Russia and Benoit coached in France before coming to the US.

My new coaches here definitely know how to improve a pupil: I'm seeing a lot of what I saw in my coach education in the lessons I receive and the ways in which I see other fencers working to win. Simple attacks, footwork, convincing feints and lots of renewals; appropriate actions for the distance and context with a sometimes boggling choice of actions and reactions to load up the difficulty and complexity of actions in all lessons, so that in a fight the less complex actions work much more effectively. All the while, trying to be consistent as possible to conceal your intentions from your opponent. One thing more than everything else: making sure the pupil HITS on every action; nothing ends with a parry or something else (although to pause and check form is not a bad thing, as we all know). As I remember hearing many times at Denstone, "we parry so that we can riposte." All things I saw in coaching from the BAF-and it works! One interesting thing to bear in mind is that sometimes I find myself giving a different instinctive response from what my coach wants at that moment. But even though I'm "wrong", because I've hit my opponent without stopping, it's not something I'm told off for because I hit and didn't get hit under pressure, which is the important thing. My coaches don't talk much during lessons; it has definitely made me get better at reading and responding to their body language as well.

This club is a first for me: I'm in a really serious competitive environment and it makes a difference to how I'm approaching my fencing and preparation. Having such a critical mass of coaches and fencers in one location definitely seems to be a key ingredient in Alliance's success in competitions. There are a lot of different fencers with widely differing styles and temperaments and I have not yet heard anyone give any comment about how something would not work in competition, because there may well be someone there doing exactly that. Everyone is allowed to be different and our coaches are simply very good at making us do the simple things very effectively (which is a lot of what I saw at the Olympics last summer) and picking out the specific flaws in our fencing game.

Although I am now getting lessons from two Russians and a Frenchman who are all excellent competitive coaches with their own distinctive styles, I would not be able to keep up with the pace of the club without the excellent foundation of fencing knowledge and technique that I got from the BAF and my BAF-trained coaches in the UK. Now I'm getting a chance to focus on my personal performance and fitness, I'm doing what I promised myself when I got through my Level 3s; enjoying my fencing for a bit. I'm not sure when I'll get back to another Denstone course, but I'll be a better competitive fencer when I do.

*Bret Gantry*



## WORSLEY'S WORDS

Musings from your Members' Rep.



Hello and Happy New Year to all the members of the Academy. Well it looks like you're stuck with me for another year, having been voted back into the role by the members at the AGM.

Firstly I'd like to say thank you to all those members that made it to the AGM and the meeting of Maîtres d'Escrime, Provosts and Members that took place earlier. Amongst the main topics discussed at that meeting were how the Academy could encourage more prospective coaches to join its ranks, the BAF bursary for its residential courses and the general feeling among some of the members they had no input to the Academy.

The first topic produced quite a lively debate; the recurring theme that the members picked up on was the fact the Academy does not widely advertise itself beyond its current membership. In order to attract new members then the Academy needs to cast its net a little wider. As one member said, most prospective new members hear about the Academy through word of mouth. This is not a bad thing, as what better advertising is there than the endorsement of someone who has been on one of the residential courses? Another member suggested that, as coaches, the responsibility lies with ourselves to find new members. We should all be looking at our own fencers and trying to persuade those who show potential to be coaches to attend the Sunday Coach Education workshops or the residential courses.

The next topic was the BAF bursary for the residential coaching courses at Denstone College. This has always been available but rarely taken up, probably because it was never very well publicised. The question put to the members was in three parts, should we keep the bursary? Who should it be available to? What criteria should we set for awarding the bursary? The majority of those present felt that the bursary was a worthy endeavour and should be kept. The next two were a little more tricky, after a lot of discussion it was felt that it should be to available Academy members only and not used as a gimmick to encourage people onto the residential courses who then may not join the Academy. No fixed criteria have been set as yet, so if anyone has any ideas as what we should be looking for in suitable recipients please let me know because as soon as can set some criteria we can press ahead with re-launching the bursary scheme.

The final topic centred on what has been described to me as a growing sense of apathy amongst the members of the Academy. It has become apparent to me over the course of the last year that the majority of the members are very silent. I have received only a few emails over the course of the year and very few members submit articles to the Academy News. The discussion that followed was quite frank and open, several of the members present admitted that they themselves felt, or knew other members who felt, that there was a kind of invisible wall between the general members and the Maîtres d'Armes and the committee. It was said that there was a feeling that the view of the members were sometimes ignored. It was even mentioned that articles were not submitted to the Academy News as it was felt they would not be published unless the author was part of the "in crowd" or a Maîtres d'Armes. This is something that is very important to me as the members' representative, because I'm here to present the opinions, concerns and questions of the general members of the Academy. It concerns me that some of the members feel undervalued especially when the tag line for the Academy News is "Run by coaches for coaches". In my view the Academy has a wealth of experience out there within its membership which covers the full spectrum of fencing coaches from those just starting to train fencers, all the way to coaches who have trained fencers to achieve international success and including those members who make a living from fencing, the full time professional coaches.

In an attempt to live up to "Run by coaches for coaches" and to make use of the experience of our members, of all levels, I would like to start a coaches' problem page. This idea was put to me by another coach on a Sunday workshop some months ago and now seems like the time to bring it to life. The general idea is that if a coach has a problem or question, rather than trying to "reinvent the wheel" they could send it to me, it goes in the problem page and other members send in suggestions, again to myself. That way if people want to remain anonymous when sending questions or suggestions, just tell me, and they can. Don't think that the problems have to be technical, it can be as simple as "how do I find a new venue for my club?" or that you have to give a definitive answer, many people just want ideas. However this will only work if people are willing to contribute questions and suggestions, and lets not forget the odd article of interest to the Academy News.

Please take the time to think about what I've mentioned and you are more than welcome to send me any comments both positive and negative about the topics above.

John Worsley

Member's Representative. Email: [worsleyja@aol.com](mailto:worsleyja@aol.com) or mobile: 07857 625 958

*To answer briefly the point about Academy News, look closely at this issue - at least a third of the editorial material has been contributed by non-Master members. Please keep it up! Bob Merry, Editor*

## THE AGM 2013

This year's AGM and Dinner was the best attended in recent years, reflecting the importance of the decisions that were to be made concerning the proposed change to becoming incorporated as a limited company, together with the subsequent changes to the Articles.

In the event, the proposal to proceed with the process was carried without dissent. When it came to the changes to the Articles, the main discussion was about the proposal to reduce the quorum at a General Meeting from 10% to 7%. In recent years we have been blessed with gradually increasing membership, but attendance at the AGM has remained fairly static. On a number of occasions, we have been perilously close to being not quorate. This has been exacerbated also by the increasing numbers of Associates of the Academy, who, although they do not have a vote, are counted, as the Articles were written, as part of the membership and could therefore affect the calculation of the quorum. After considering various options, it was eventually decided, by an overwhelming majority, to reduce the quorum to 7% of the **voting** membership. This should make it easier to conduct the business of the AGM in future, without the problem of being unable to take legal decisions.

The other matter that went to a vote at the meeting was the election of the Vice-Presidents. There were three nominations for the two posts; Professors Louisa Miller, Peter Cormack and Peter Northam. A secret ballot was held and Louisa Miller and Peter Northam were elected. After the meeting Peter Northam said, *"My thanks to the AGM for proposing and accepting me as a Vice President of the Academy, and thanks to Prof Peter Cormack for his time in the post. I spent four years on Committee some time ago, in a vain attempt (as it turned out) to get the Academy and British Fencing coaching together. I enjoyed the process but was disappointed with the result. The next few years for the Academy look interesting but it depends on what we do to help ourselves, our future is in our own hands. To the membership I would say, send me your concerns or ideas; speak to me at competitions; support the Committee. I am very proud to be a member of the Academy, I hope you are too."*

Later that evening, a total of thirty-four members and guests enjoyed the Dinner, followed by the presentation of the awards to Philip Bruce and Tony Klenczar, and certificates to John Worsley and Paul Williams. Jon Daley had earlier been presented with his certificates at the conclusion of the AGM. The socialising and "networking" continued for some hours in the hotel bar and it would seem that this had been a very successful AGM. If you couldn't make it this year, why not make an effort to attend the next AGM in January 2014?

## THE AGM - A VIEW FROM THE FLOOR

*By Liz Williams*

I've just come back from the Academy AGM and, full of New Year resolutions and inspired, I thought I would write for the Newsletter. Hopefully it will make a change to read a different point of view, and I suspect I have rather a different point of view!

A little background for those of you who don't know me. I took up fencing late, nearly ten years ago, after a career as a trainer and teacher in retail and education. I am now regarded as a "professional" fencing coach apparently, as I own Buccaneer blades, coach full-time in schools, employ fantastic coaches to run holiday camps and generally pay the bills with a sword!

My professional life has been brought sharply into focus in the last few months as my mentor and the most influential fencing coach for me, Professor Jim Perry, died in July and that has meant major changes. He introduced me to the Academy, convinced me to go down to Somerset each week to train with him and annoyed me so much by suggesting I should become a "proper fencing coach" (I had done BFA qualifications!) that I went on my first course. He also supported me through my next two, which weren't so successful! (I should have listened when he said do Sabre not épée!)

I occasionally worked for him – I covered for his skiing trips and was working for him in July. As I built up my own circuit we aimed to pit our students against each other later last year. He was a great listener and a fabulous story teller and although a hard task master had the gift to make you go away happier with yourself than you had been when you arrived. Something I have always aspired to and something that was great to discover in another fencing coach, at that time.

Last weekend I listened as Phil Bruce spoke about his relationships with his coaches and I was surprised to find that he was speaking of something of which I was acutely aware. By inspiring your students to better themselves, they want to do their best for you, to make you proud, and Phil was a great example of that as he spoke of his own coaches. All of us, whether we are volunteers or paid coaches, full-time or occasional, need to appreciate the impact we have on the lives of our students. The fencing is, of course, incredibly important. However, I would suggest our greatest impact is not what we teach but how we teach.

I have taken on some of Jim's schools, and all the children, even ones who only met "Mr Perry" once, have something to tell me about him. It may not be fencing related either, but it is a connection that they will carry throughout their lives and so their impression of fencing is a good one.

How many of us can say that we leave every one of our students with a great impression of the sport? It's easy to do with the gifted students who learn quickly and are adept and talented, but what about the others, who are clumsy and timid, worried or in a world of their own? I have always been a trainer or teacher and I am definitely a "people person" and what I have to say may not be rocket science but as a fencing coach I think you have to love to teach and coach, not just love fencing or be a great competitor.

I have found it difficult to commit to coming back to training for my next exams as Jim will always be "my coach" and I am struggling to find another who fits with me. My conclusion is, though, that he made me a better coach, undoubtedly because his fencing coaching was second to none, but also because he was interested in me as a person, and used that to get the best out of me.

I am not be a fencing master and may never be, but my goal is to become a better coach and always inspire my students to do better and to be the best they can be. The Academy has always helped create better fencing, with incredibly high standards, and I hope it will continue to realise that passing on the inspirational coaching of those technical skills is just as important.



*Jon Daley receives his certificate*



*A Proud Paul Williams*

### **PICTURES FROM THE AGM**



*Diploma for John Worsley*



*A Candlelit Dinner*



*A Convivial Gathering*



*And this is just the start...*



### **CONGRATULATIONS, ANDY**

Professor Andy Alderman, the man behind the successful Shetland Fencing Club has triumphed in the **sportscotland** Highlands and Islands Regional Coaching Awards.

He is seen being presented with the award by Jan Stander, Regional Coaching & Volunteering Manager **Sportscotland**, after receiving a record 252 nominations.

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

### **BAF RESIDENTIAL COURSE**

#### **Easter Course - 1st April to 6th April 2013**

Course to be held at Denstone College, Staffordshire.

**Fees (to be confirmed): £463 (members) £499 (non-members)**

Applications made after 2nd March to be paid in full and are subject to a £40 late application fee

**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.*

**Don't delay - Apply Now!**

### **COACH EDUCATION WORKSHOPS - KENILWORTH**

**Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> February & Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2013**

**10am – 4pm**

**St. John's Primary School, Mortimer Road, Kenilworth, CV8 1FS (side entrance to school hall).**

**£30 per session per coach payable on the day. No charge for pupils but please advise in advance if you are bringing one with you.**

**Staffed by Prof. Peter Cormack & Prof. Louisa Miller**

The workshop will cater for levels 1-5 in all three weapons and is suitable for those who are working towards coaching examinations or simply wish to improve their existing coaching skills. The emphasis in these workshops will be on the acquisition and application of practical 'sword in hand' teaching/ coaching skills within individual and class lessons.

Anyone wishing to attend a Workshop should contact Peter Cormack (see page 3 for details), *as soon as possible*. Peter can also answer any other questions you may have.

### **ADVERTISE HERE FOR FREE!**

***This page is devoted to items letting our members know of courses and other events. If you have a course, event, or even a club you want to advertise here, contact the Editor, Bob Merry, to discuss this. There is no charge to members and you don't even have to supply any artwork. Simply give Bob Merry the details and he'll see you get a mention on this page.***

### **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.***