



Off Piste



Gravesham Fencing Club Newsletter - May 2014

Welcome to a new edition of the Gravesham Fencing Club newsletter.

It is intended to produce these at least every other month, depending on content available.

In this edition we have:

- A recap of recent competition results of club members
- Some fencing images of interest
- The first of a series of short articles on 'Swords through the ages' by our resident sword expert.
- A for sale/wanted notice board for members to use.
- Other club related information that I hope you find interesting.

Don't forget that this is your newsletter and it cannot continue without your help with content. Please send your ideas, pictures, jokes etc to the editor.

Congratulations to - Billy Mayhew, Brendan Last, Arie Hamilton, Vas and Mak who have passed Grade I Foil, and especially to Lucy Snellin who has passed Level I foil refereeing exam, to go with her Level I epee refereeing exam.

I know the Olympics seem a long time ago now, but this is a shot from that little known Olympic sport – midi fence, and it's our very own club captain on the finals piste.

(Scott went on to win!)



Recent competition results and reports

This is a précis and not fully up to date, more in the next newsletter

Steven MacPherson 2nd in Epsom Leon Paul under-13 epee.

Lucy Snellin 3rd in U16 Regional Foil, qualifying for BYC finals

Joe Joyner is south-east region senior epee champion, to add to his Kent title.

Andrew Bardo wins club under-14 foil competition.

Lucy and Holly Snellin both fence for the victorious south-east region Cadet Winton team.

Gold for Holly Snellin and silver for Lucy Snellin in Kent age-group championships.

Catherine Gandolfi triumphs in club women's foil.

Cameron Prior in British cadet epee squad in Bonn and Copenhagen.

Steven MacPherson 2nd in Millfield Leon Paul under-13 epee.

Kent Foil Competition - reported by Joe Joyner

A successful day at the county individual and team foil championships.

Myself, Paul and Peter won the team event after a hard fought match against Blackheath in the final.

Peter Barwell also retained his Kent title for the 8th time earlier on in the day. Lucy came 3rd in the women's foil receiving 1st place for the highest placed intermediate I'm not sure where Paul finished.

South East competition write up - reported by John Anderson

Joe Joyner showed again that he is a class act with the epee when he took the south-east region senior title at Canterbury on 19 January. Although he had several hard fights he never looked like losing any, and demonstrated his accuracy and timing to great effect. Besides the trophy for winning, he also retained the under-20 cup. A number of spectators commented on his laid-back approach between fights. With 2 successive Kent senior titles under his belt, it would seem time for Joe to pitch himself against even stronger opposition at the national and international level.

As first seed after the qualifying pool, Joe unfortunately had to fight and eliminate Dave Chapman in the last 16. Dave has virtually no competition experience, but created an excellent impression in winning his last 32 fight, and finished 15th overall..

In the women's competition, Carly Cross fenced impressively to be seeded 5th after the qualifying pool. Gravesham's other entrant was Holly Snellin, who started slowly to end as 12th seed. Unfortunately this meant that she was drawn against Carly to whom she lost. Carly then lost to the 4th seed.

Final positions were Carly 6th and Holly 14th.

It was good to see Clive Wren, former club treasurer, come in support in the early stages.

Invicta Open - reported by John Anderson

4 Gravesham fencers participated in the Invicta Open Epee. There were 79 entries in the men's event and 47 in the women's. All the club fencers were eliminated in the last 32.

Joe Joyner lost two of his pool bouts. In the last 64 he had a tense bout against Calum Maynard and was down 13-12 but managed to win 15-13. He then was up against second seed Tim Buzwell, and was always struggling after a poor start.

Cameron Prior had a convincing victory in the last 64, but was then against top seed Brombini of Italy, to whom he lost despite a creditable performance.

Carly Bland was seeded 9th after the pool stage stage, which gave her a bye to the last 32. In an exciting bout she was just defeated 15-14.

Holly Snellin reached the last 32 with a good victory over a Belgian, giving her a first international success. In the last 32, she was defeated 15-6.

Swords through the ages - the first of a series of articles by Dave Bardo

I. The origins of the weapon

Throughout time, man has always sought a means of killing – either for survival (in man's early days) such as hunting or to defend himself.

Man has made use of tools probably beginning during the stone age around 2.5 million years ago. Edged weapons were usually fashioned from flint and started with the simple hand axe. This gradually developed into more sophisticated weapons such as spear and arrow points, axes (attached to wooden shaft) and likely early knives. However, stone although plentiful, is very brittle and breaks easily in use. This would likely limited the physical length of stone of stone knife blades.

The earliest (true) swords begin to appear during the bronze age (starting around 3,500 BC) and continued to develop with man's discovery and knowledge of using other metal ores. Bronze is a metal alloy of copper (approx 90%) and tin (approx 10%) usually cast. That is, hot molten metal poured into a shaped (separate, two sided vessel held together) mould and removed when cooled.



A well preserved original Celtic solid cast leaf bladed bronze sword

Early European bronze swords start to appear around 2,000 BC. Bronze swords are generally (though not all) cast as single item, e.g. blade, hilt and pommel. Bronze sword blades vary in shape from straight (parallel), pointed (tapering to point) and 'leaf' shaped. The blades often feature a raised, central 'ridge' (which gave strength) or shallow groove(s) running the length of the blade which both lightened (for better balance) and strengthened the weapon. These grooves are called a 'fuller' and are not 'blood grooves'. The use of the fuller would continue to appear on blades throughout time even with the development of modern steels.



Modern reproductions of two Greek style bronze swords that feature both a ridge and fuller blade

The great advantage of bronze was it was relatively easily to produce. The disadvantage is that bronze as a metal is fairly 'soft' so is easily damaged and bent in actual use. What was needed was a blade to be strong even in use (to be able to hold a sharp edge) but flexible even to resist striking energy. The bronze sword would be continued to be used by most ancient civilisations throughout the world until the discovery of iron ore around 800 BC – thus man now enters into the 'iron age'.

In the following series, I will profile key swords through the ages as opposed to a complete history of the weapon. The next article will look at some early iron age swords such as those used by the Celt and Romans.

Fencing on Ice anyone?

Did any members notice in the Radio Times, in a list of potential 'fantasy' celebrity sports along the lines of channel 4's 'The Jump' that could injure them rather than just humiliate them. One of these was Fencing on ice, combining speed skating with sword play, which could possibly be the most injurious sport know to celebrity, requiring dexterity, cunning, balance, courage and frequent medical intervention. With possibly half the contestants maimed during the first training session.

Members and beginners wanted

Beginners as well as the number of members, are very important to the club, as their numbers help keep the costs of the club – and the cost of membership down.

As an aid to attracting new members and beginners, we have produced a postcard sized, double sided advert of the club that can be put on community notice boards etc in the locality or handed out to interested parties. So far nearly 200 of these have been distributed around the Gravesham area. If you think that you can circulate any of these in the locality, please see Peter or Catherine Gandolfi.

An example is below:



Fencing

Professional instruction is available for all members

Learn and enjoy the sport of modern sword fighting

A great way to get fit and keep fit
Beginners courses each term for all ages
on Fridays, 6.30pm and 8.00pm
All equipment provided

BRITISH FENCING
Membership No. 4299

Fencing, the sport for all, from 7 to 70+

AGY
Association of Gravesham Youth Organisations



Gravesham Fencing Club

The club caters for social, developing and competitive fencers from beginner to international.

Fencing is a good exercise for the whole body and mind. It develops co-ordination and reflexes, and offers the mental challenge of outwitting your opponent. Speed and timing are more important than strength.

Phone Catherine for details on 01689 831826
Or visit www.graveshamfencing.org.uk

Venue: Cygnets Leisure Centre, Old Perry Street, Northfleet, DA11 8BU

For Sale/Wanted notice board

If any of you have any fencing related kit that you want to sell, or that you want, please let me know and it can be advertised here.

For Sale

Fencing jacket 350N Leon Paul 'club' men's size 38" RH – very good condition

Breeches 800 Newton, 32" waist RH – very good condition

Lame (modern with tab) 42" RH – as new

Steam foils french grip size 5 and pistol grip size 3

Electric foils pistol grip RH size 5 and size 3

Short tang steam foil blades size 5 new from stock

If interested in any of the above, please contact Peter or Catherine Gandolfi

Caption Competition - What is the tall lady - or the dummy saying/thinking?



Signing in

It is important that all fencers sign in at the start of each session. This is important for fire regulations as well as allowing the evening to be planned according to numbers present.

Could all fencers ensure that in future they always sign in and out.

To assist our treasurer, all payments into the cash box such as session payments and odd one off payments, such as a club kit purchase or weapon repair should be accompanied by a slip from the grey box marked odd payments on the desk.

Competition kit

The club now keeps a selection of kit, specifically for use by members for competition use outside the club. If you need any, please let a committee member know, the week before if possible. We now have a loan book for this purpose.

Club merchandise

Don't forget that the club has a range of merchandise available

Club T-Shirts- junior sizes, £7.50, senior sizes £8.50

Club Hoodies- junior sizes £14.00, senior sizes £19.00

Gravesham sew on badges are also available.

Please see Scott, or a member of the committee for more information.

Suggestions

If you have any thoughts or suggestions on what to include in future newsletters, drop me a line.

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