



BRITISH VETERANS FENCING

NEWS LETTER

Date: April 2021

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WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

Carl Morris BVF Chairman

Hello and welcome to part two of our first Newsletter of 2021.

I hope you find the content interesting and informative.

For me, all the articles were enjoyable, but I would like to draw your attention to the first two in particular, submitted by Lindsay and Graham as they are especially important for those of us who will be getting back on the piste very shortly.

Lindsay's piece has put me on a guilt trip because for the last 12 months I have been that 'couch potato' she describes, taking the mistaken view that I will spring back on the piste on May the 17th with no loss of effectiveness and no risk of injury. Graham's piece has also reminded me that I'm no longer that young handsome guy who could get away with such things. Well no longer young anyway! Actually, in the last 40 odd years I have never had such a long period of no fencing. In fact, I don't think that I have ever had such a long period of inactivity (if you don't include walking the dog) and I don't think that I am on my own in finding myself in new territory.

So read, absorb and please be careful when you return to your club. That red mist (which most of us still all get) could be red for danger in the first couple of months.

RIP Connie and Keith

I'm sure most of you will be aware from the website that we recently lost two of our most well-known members. Connie Adams and Keith Smith. They were both significant figures in our fencing world and will not be forgotten.

Committee News

The committee has certainly not been idle! A new 'slimmed down' Constitution has been written, ready to be adopted (hopefully) at the EGM/AGM. We are also developing a set of Rules & Regulations containing some parts of the old Constitution, most of the existing policies along with some new ones and further guidance to make the organisation run more smoothly.

Another big project has been the development of a new website, which Lucy and Mike Swiffen have been working on together, providing members with all the information of the old one but looking a bit snazzier and more enticing to potential members as well as being easier to maintain and update. Keep watching - it's on its way!

Earlier in the year Graham, as Chair of Selectors, recruited 3 new members to ensure that both genders are represented in all three weapons. They have already had two lengthy zoom meetings to discuss which criteria they will use for selection dependent upon the conditions at the time. Graham's selection team is:

Foil - Gillian Worman & Nick Mort

Epee - Jenny Morris & Neal Mallett

Sabre - Jane Hutchison & Chris Prevett

As I mentioned in my last letter, because of the closeness of the last vote on a proposed name change we are revisiting the topic this year. I am well aware that this is a very controversial issue with some people being strongly in favour of it, some very strongly opposed to it and many not bothered either way. We think it not fair to just put it on an agenda for an EGM or an AGM and expect people to vote on it without really appreciating the reasoning and implications involved in a name change. So, in a run up to a vote we intend to set up an internet forum where the case can be made, and all the pros and cons debated online. Following that, our intention at the moment is to invite all members to a zoom meeting where anyone who holds strong views

has the opportunity to get their point across in person to the Committee. After this process has taken place, we will hold an EGM or an AGM to vote on the new Constitution and the proposed name change.

We had our third Committee meeting of the year on 24th April, and it was good to have Georgina Usher join us to provide advice and support. She updated us on BF initiatives, aspects of insurance, associate membership and current covid restrictions.

The Committee is pleased to announce that, at the meeting, Gillian Aghajan has agreed to be co-opted on to the Committee in a non-voting capacity as International Team Manager and EVF representative.

Future events: return to competition.

The burning issues of the moment though are obviously what events are being planned and how they will be affected by Covid.

Guildford – Still planned for the weekend of the 31st July. However, the Committee decided that due to the uncertain level of infections outside of our borders, plus the fact that this event is likely to be used for selection for the World Championships, should they go ahead, that we are restricting entries to BVF members with a BF compete licence, only. Further restrictions may apply depending upon circumstances at that time and we will update you of that.

The Nationals, originally scheduled for early July in Manchester, have had to be cancelled due to Covid. We are still looking for a weekend in the last quarter to hold the event, that doesn't clash with events that BF are also planning for the last quarter. This will be decided very soon, and we will post it on the website as soon as the date is decided.

The Winton Cup – Sept 25th/26th - This is still on track. We have already contacted members who are very keen to participate. Marcia and Lindsay have worked hard on this and with Gillian's help we are planning the usual sit-down meal on the Saturday evening.

The World's 4th –10th October – Obviously, this doesn't affect most of us, but it's a really important event for us and one that causes the most work for our selectors. At the moment Graham and his team are still deciding how many will be selected from Guildford and how many discretionary places will be awarded. Until they know the strength of Guildford it's a difficult decision and one that can't be made right now.

Also we don't know what the situation will be in America in October. Georgina painted a pretty bleak picture for us of what competing abroad is like at the moment. The fencing has its own restrictions, but even after fencing it doesn't seem to be too much fun at all. Having to go changed, come back changed, straight back to your hotel room and not go out again or socialise at all seems a bit grim. Hopefully things will have relaxed considerably by October but those FIE restrictions may still be in force. We are going to test the water to see who would be interested in going under such conditions by sending out a sample survey of likely contenders to get an idea whether we will be fielding a full team or not.

Well that's about all I can update you on for now so finally, a thank you from me to Nicola for putting this Newsletter together, a thank you to the contributors, and on behalf of the Committee I hope you enjoy it

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BACK TO FENCING, DO YOUR BREECHES STILL FIT?

Lindsay Bottoms Head of Centre for Research in Psychology & Sports Science



These last 12 months have been an incredibly challenging time for everyone. The restrictions that have had to happen have really had an impact on our ability to undertake our beloved sport of fencing. You can probably count on one hand how many sparring sessions you have had, and I think it is safe to say, we have forgotten what a competition looks like. Thankfully, many coaches have adapted to the challenge and offered online sessions. I know

these are not the same but they have enabled us to at least keep some fencing specific fitness.

Being an academic I have undertaken research looking at changes in physical activity during the pandemic, but unfortunately our results are not yet analysed. But the literature published has shown that sitting time has increased over 33%. For a lot of people this means sitting for over 12 hours a day. Sadly, this sitting time has big consequences for our health and reduces our body's ability to metabolise fat (which can increase chances of cardiovascular disease) even if you were to do your online fencing or other activity that evening.

Start thinking about breaking up your days with activity, especially as we are getting closer to being able to start fencing again. Not only has our sitting time increased, but most people are doing less physical activity in general. For most of us, whether we realise it or not our fitness levels will have decreased over the last 12 months. Even if you have been active, your fencing fitness will probably have decreased. We need to remember this when we start going along to our fencing clubs once they reopen. But we can start preparing for that now, to try and avoid the possible injuries and problems that could come if we start too vigorously on our return.

It is important that you start increasing your base aerobic fitness by doing more brisk walking/jogging/cycling. To be able to do fencing conditioning, we must have a certain base level of aerobic fitness. Also, aerobic exercise will enable us to burn some of those excess calories that we may be carrying. I would also ensure that you start doing some of the online training sessions, which will get you doing footwork and some fencing specific movement. This will get your body to remember what the movement feels like. I would also consider doing some stretching to increase flexibility, but if you do this ensure you do this with warm muscles – perhaps after aerobic exercise. Just remember, increase everything gradually...we have time to before fencing will start again.

The other issue with lockdown and working more from home is our penchant for eating unhealthy snacks. Our diet has suffered due to being at home more!

Naturally, I personally find that if I am being more active my diet improves along with it. Let's try and turn to the healthy snacks rather than the unhealthy ones. If you are like me, I cannot have things in the house as I have

no will power. So maybe change what is on the shopping list! One of the issues I find with fencing, is that we often train late at night and this can affect what we have for dinner and our desire to snack.

Also, training can feel exhausting but in reality we aren't burning many calories. We often feel we need to replace the calories we have burnt, but our normal diet will be sufficient. I can hear you say, what is a normal diet? There are many theories floating about as to the best diet to have such as gluten free, paleo diet and high fat diets. Having taught nutrition to my students and done a lot of reading around the various diets, the answer that is clear to me is that each person is different especially if the goal is losing weight. For us, that might be the case now since COVID started, especially to help us get in to our fencing kit! We need to burn more calories than we ingest, so ensuring you are getting vitamins and minerals by following the diet that works for you and that you can stick with. In terms of performance, it is different. The evidence still points to a high carbohydrate diet being the most beneficial (60% carbohydrate, 30% fat and 20% protein). We can go in to this in more detail another time.

In conclusion, let's start preparing for fencing returning by breaking up our day of sitting, gently easing back in to activity and increasing our baseline fitness as well as starting to do online training sessions (if you aren't already doing so). Let's kick our unhealthy snack habits as well. It's time to start fitting in to our fencing kit.

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FITNESS, DON'T LET IT GET AWAY FROM YOU

Graham Paul shares some ideas to help veteran fencers with limited time to build and retain fitness.

It is well known that one of the effects of aging is a decrease in muscle strength. I can vouch for this. The scientific literature does suggest that this decrease can be slowed by exercise. However, the other aging effect that I had not appreciated was that my strength decreased much faster during a period of inactivity than when younger and took longer to regain when I restarted exercise. This means that I really have to be training most days just

to maintain fitness. I sometimes think that I need to train more now than when I was in the senior team!

It is difficult to train at a fencing club or go to a commercial gym five days a week even without the Covid restrictions. However, strength training can easily be carried out at home using just body weight.

For fencing I have found that my handwork has not suffered too much with age, but it is footwork and movement on the piste that is most affected by muscle loss. The major muscle groups that need to be exercised are:

Quads, Hamstrings, Glutes, Calves and Core.

I try to do the exercises below every day. Ideally you should do as many repetitions as you are able to, with three sets and about 90 secs rest between each set, having done a gentle warm-up first.

Quads are the muscles on the top of the thighs that straighten the knee when activated. Most fencers develop a larger front quad.

To strengthen them sit on a chair and then stand up without using your arms. If this is easy, try using just one leg, or from a lower chair.

A second exercise is to step up on to a surface that is slightly below the height of your knee from the ground when standing.

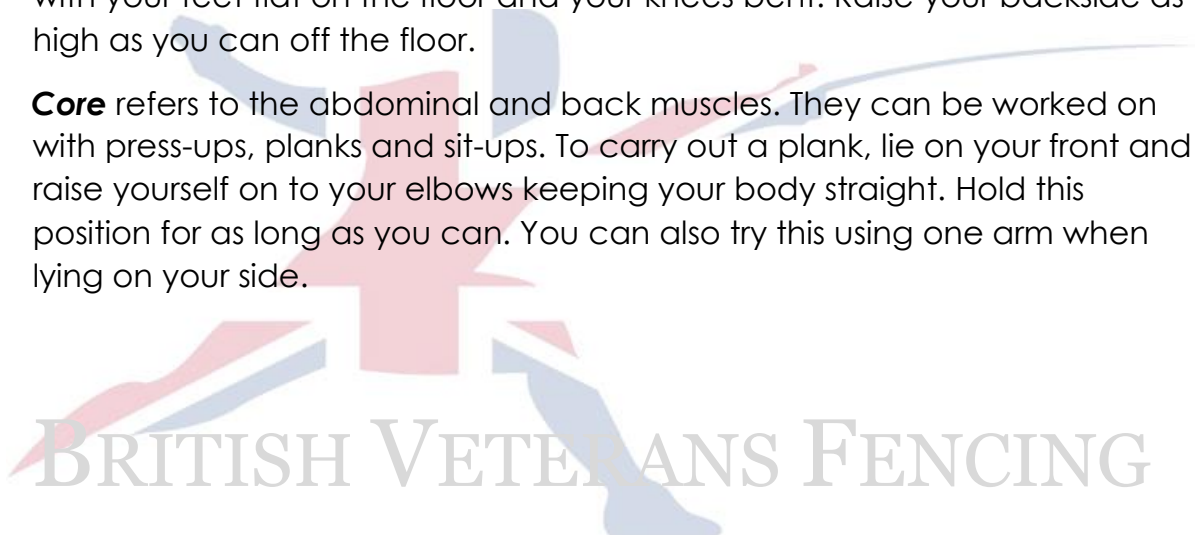
Hamstrings are the muscles that bend your knees and are under your thighs. To exercise them, lie on your back on the floor and rest your feet on an object so that your knees are at right angles with your thighs vertical.

Push your backside off the floor as high as you can, so that you are supported on your shoulders. Repeat as many times as you can. If you find this too easy, use one leg at a time, with the other leg raised into the air.

Calves are the muscles at the back of your lower leg. To exercise your calves, stand on stairs facing up, with the front of your feet on the step, and the rear part of your feet overhanging the step. Raise and lower your heels. To make this more difficult, use one leg at a time.

Glutes are the muscle group in your backside. To exercise, lie on your back with your feet flat on the floor and your knees bent. Raise your backside as high as you can off the floor.

Core refers to the abdominal and back muscles. They can be worked on with press-ups, planks and sit-ups. To carry out a plank, lie on your front and raise yourself on to your elbows keeping your body straight. Hold this position for as long as you can. You can also try this using one arm when lying on your side.





Examples and videos of all these exercises and alternatives for each muscle group can easily be found online.

I also think that is beneficial to do footwork as regularly as possible. This can be done in quite a small space. I sometimes do my footwork wearing a 10kg weight jacket.

Another important aspect of fitness that becomes more of an issue with age is lack of flexibility. Veteran fencers should carry out **flexibility** exercises every day. Concentrate working on flexibility for fencing positions, such as a lunge, but do not leave out general flexibility. Again, look online to see examples of exercises and make sure you have warmed-up as this will help avoid injury.

Over the years I have tried other activities to help with fencing. I have found cycling and running build up cardiovascular fitness, but they do nothing for fencing speed. Fencing is all about acceleration and changing direction, probably more than any other sport, and the slow twitch muscles that are developed by cycling and running are not helpful. I have found that even squash, which has a stop start motion, does not build up speed on the piste. Playing squash against top players' years ago, I found that if I neglected my fencing training, I slowed down on the squash court.

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BREXIT, WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR LEON PAUL

Putting our best post-Brexit foot forward. As Brexit loomed, we took the view that our European customers still had to have the best that we could possibly offer them, writes **Alex Paul** of Leon Paul. Pre-pandemic we exported around 200 parcels a week into Europe. Unpicking the effects of Brexit from those of Covid is rather tricky so we are not yet able to tell what the final effect will be on our trade either to Europe or globally.

The first difficulty that the whole business world faced was the lack of a transition period, what was called a transition period was in fact a continuation of the negotiation. This meant that as a business we either



had to prepare for every possible outcome; do nothing, or, as most businesses did pick a line somewhere in between. We did all of the essentials in terms of registrations and ensuring all of our products had the relevant commodity codes automatically forwarded to our courier. This went some way to ensuring a smooth transition. What could not have been predicted was exactly what the deal would bring in terms of taxes, duties and charges.

The “duty free” deal we have means that we save on duty charged on our exports to Europe. Had we left on WTO rules we had calculated our goods would have incurred an average 4% duty charge, so this has been good news. Unfortunately, there are significant other costs that still make the direct shipment of small value parcels to Europe far less efficient than they used to be: “friction free” it certainly is not!

We must pay a minimum of £14.50 extra per shipment in fees, we have additional work in terms of paperwork to get the goods successfully to the customer and there are inevitable delays as the goods are imported into Europe.

If we are to give European customers, the best that we can offer then it means for now that we have to take these extra costs on the chin but if things don't get better, we will have to explore other options. We hope that charges will come down and delays will reduce as things bed in but so far, nearly three months in, there is not much sign of improvement.

THE SOUND OF BLACKNESS INCOMPLETE

Celebrating talented members – a poem by Kola Ayanwale

Aunty Rosa rode bus not long ago
But there's no freedom in our Parks today
Malcolm raised his arms against injustice
Today we only have an X to mark the spot of our oppression
And brother Martin spoke of freedom's reign
But we cannot win here
We're loved on the track and field
But we can't be King, even in our homes

We may ride the waves of victory
On the courts of daily sport
But when we reach for that protective bubble
Of the written social contract
We find that very support
Brings us up hard, and stops us short

We struggled back then
To be richer today
There was hope in our hearts
Someday we'd all play
We're still praying for someday
Just hoping that one day
Walking and talking
Won't earn us a bruising

We want to hear shouts of laughter
Without fear of disaster
Sleep with our loved ones
Not wake up to cop guns
Drive to the beat of our music and hits
To have no fear of being dragged to our knees
Flat on our faces

MASKING UP

Malcolm Fare pinpoints the introduction of masks



The coloured engraving of Angelo's Academy by Rowlandson, 1787 is the first fencing scene to show a mask. The French fencing master Texier de La Boëssière is generally credited with inventing the wire mask in the mid-18th century, but it was resisted for many years. England's leading fencing master, Domenico Angelo, initially forbade their use in his academy, believing that good fencers had no need of them. However, his son Henry, known as Harry, recalled that, while studying in Paris in 1773, he fenced with Lord Mazarene, "without a mask... when I swallowed some inches, button and all, of my noble opponent's foil". By the time he took over his father's academy in 1785, masks were gradually being introduced and one is shown in this print being tied on to a beginner's head, although the two protagonists, Harry (right) and a visiting fencing master, do not bother with them.

The scene shows Angelo's room at the Royal Opera House, Haymarket, London. It has alcoves fitted with racks of foils. The walls are hung with framed prints and the freshly painted portrait of the Chevalier de Saint-Georges by Mather Brown, commissioned by Harry, presides over all. Kneeling at the front on the left doing up his shoe is Lebrun, a leading Parisian maitre d'armes. On the right, Domenico holds spare foils, while seated on either side of him are

the Marquis of Buckingham (left) and the radical politician Charles James Fox (right). Standing on the extreme right, Rowlandson depicts himself. The figure on the extreme left is an old man, but when the print was reissued four years later, he was replaced by a boy (possibly one of Harry's sons, 8-year-old George or 7-year-old Henry), as the old man is thought to have died.



1787



1791

Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827) was a close friend of Harry Angelo for over 50 years and drew several fencing scenes of which this is the most complete. Angelo's room was destroyed by fire on 17th June 1789, although Harry managed to salvage his most treasured possession, the portrait of Saint-Georges, which remained at the Academy until it disappeared in the 1890s.

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If you have a submission for the BVF Newsletter or any comments,
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