

BVF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

held at

**The Harvey Hadden Sports Village,
Wigman Road, Bilborough, Nottingham, NG8 4PB
on Saturday 20 April 2024 at 5.15pm**



Committee members present: Carl Morris (CM) President, Paul Baillache (PB) Treasurer, Luce Wright (LW) Secretary, Gillian Aghajan, Beth Cranston-Selby, Naomi Donaldson, Jane Hutchison, Graham Paul.

Attendees: 23 members of BVF

Apologies: Silvia and Andrew Brown, Mark Richardson, Berl Goldbart, Mark Barton, Paula Sullivan, Sarah Budden, Moya and John Crouch and Brian Speight.

Approval of the minutes of the AGM held on 11 March 2023

On a proposal by Ev Van Gemeren seconded by Gillian Aghajan the minutes were unanimously accepted as an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the President.

President's Report (appended)

CM delivered his report outlining BVF's activities in 2023.

Secretary's Report (appended)

LW spoke on the items in her report which had not already been covered by the President.

Treasurer's Report (appended)

PB had published the accounts and his report on the BVF website. He thanked Joanne Yeates for her audit.

PB noted that the membership has been the same for many years and an increase may soon be necessary to meet increasing costs of administration (software for surveys and remote meetings) and increases in venue and equipment hire and hotel rates.

On a proposal by Davis Sweeney seconded by John Hyde, the accounts for 2023 were unanimously approved.

Membership report (appended).

JH delivered the membership report and the following questions were asked:

1. *Are the World Championships changing to include 40-49 year olds?*

GA replied that there will be a trial event for 40-49 but this may not be in all weapons. Decisions will be made at the FIE Comex meeting in November.

2. *Will BVF start preparing now for this change?*

It was agreed that the committee would look at the situation.

3. *What are the arrangements for this year's World Championships?*

GA announced that nothing would be confirmed until the official invitation is released in June. Although the dates and venue are unlikely to change the advice is not to book anything which cannot be cancelled.

4. *When will selection take place?*

The individual event will be selected very soon and the team a little later.

5. *Why did some BVF members not renew last year?*

The Age Groups last year were run externally and, due to a misunderstanding, were held as an open with no requirement to be a BVF member. Therefore, some fencers were able to fence in a BVF event without renewing their membership. This will not happen again.

The meeting considered the following amendments to the Constitution:

To remove Clause 5bii

5b) The Committee shall consist of:

i) ...

ii) The founder member of BVF (formerly the National Veterans Association) who has been conferred the title of Life President, elected by general meeting and will hold this title without the requirement of re-election.

Following the death of Henry de Silva, founder member of BVF, this clause is no longer needed.

On a proposal by Lawrence Burr and seconded by Michele Narey it was unanimously decided to remove clause 5bii.

To amend Clause 10c (Dissolution of the BVF)

Current wording:

After discharging all the debts and liabilities of BVF, the remaining assets shall not be paid out or distributed amongst the members of BVF but shall be given or transferred to BF to be used for the benefit of veterans fencing.

Proposed wording:

On dissolution of BVF or merger of BVF with another organisation, after discharging all the debts and liabilities of BVF, the remaining assets shall not necessarily be paid out or distributed amongst the members of BVF, but the remaining funds will be placed in Trust, or a similar legal arrangement, the purpose of which will be to support veterans fencing activities. Trustees will be appointed by BVF, and the exact rules of the Trust developed, at the relevant time. A limited distribution may also be considered to BF and/or the Home Nations for specific use in veterans fencing.

PB presented this suggestion to the meeting. The change was deemed necessary due to the need to protect the funds built up by BVF more robustly than the current wording allows. There is no anticipation that anything untoward is going to happen and the membership would be consulted if anything did happen.

There were some objections from the floor. One member thought that this matter could be considered at a later date. Another member pointed out that a trust fund could last longer than its trustees, which might leave uninformed people in charge of the money. There was also a suggestion that the simplest solution would be to give British Fencing the money to ring fence for veterans.

Rosalind Graham seconded by Ev Van Gemeren proposed the motion to replace the current wording with the proposed wording. There being 21 members for, 6 against and 4 abstentions, the motion was carried.

Elections

Paul Baillache was elected unopposed as Treasurer and Naomi Donaldson and Graham Paul were elected unopposed as ordinary members. All will serve a three-year term.

CM thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting was closed at 5.55pm.

Luce Wright

BVF Secretary

APPENDICES

President's Report

2023 was a full year for us following the pandemic years. We're back to our normal three qualifying events plus holding The German Match and a new event for us - the Bard's Bash.

Seven meetings were held with one physical meeting held in Swindon arranged to discuss normal business plus selection criteria and related issues as this is a subject that divides opinions so is always under review.

On the international scene there were, and are still, political restrictions concerning Ukraine but domestically we seem to be getting back to business as usual.

AGM

As I mentioned in last year's report, to ensure continuity of experience, only three of the committee, including one of the officers, will be up for election at this AGM and the remaining members will have been deemed to have been elected for a 3 year term in 2020 and will serve for the remainder of that tenure. If someone stands down either before or during the AGM we can co-opt a replacement who will take on the remainder of that person's tenure.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

Newsletter – Many thanks to Gillian and the editorial committee for taking over the reins from Nicola and producing the newsletter for us. We've had three colourful publications bursting with the latest information of veteran exploits that I hope you've all enjoyed.

Selection – Our method for GB selection is constantly under review. As mentioned earlier apart from our normal discussions we again looked at our criteria in our Swindon Meeting. We felt that the current system still selects the best teams and is the simplest and fairest system to use.

I must give thanks to our Chair of Selectors **Graham Paul** and his team of selectors who are –

Epee	- Neal Mallett	Marg Oniye
Foil	- Gillian Worman	Nick Mort
Sabre	- Jane Hutchison	Chris Prett

EVENTS

Guildford International 7th/8th January – As usual our first event of the year which is not only the only three weapon event on the EVF circuit but our first qualifier for the World Championships and also counted toward European Team event selection.

Age Groups LP London 25th/26th Feb & 5th March 2023

Unfortunately we again had to split the events over two weekends. But they were successfully held at Leon Paul Fencing Centre with almost 200 of our fencers participating. Many thanks to Jon Willis and his team for their organisation here.

National Championships – Manchester 21st- 2nd April

Held at Manchester and successfully run by Mike and Lyn Robinson, this was the last of our qualifying events and allowed us to complete our Ranking lists for the selection of the World Championship Squad.

The Home Nations Veteran Quadrangular – Dublin March 25th 2023

Held at the beautiful Trinity College in Dublin it was a hotly contested tournament won by England (again) followed by a dinner much enjoyed by all who attended.

Veterans European Individual Championships - Thionville France 15th -21st May

Our GBR squad returned from Thionville with a creditable haul of 11 medals including 3 Golds and on the medals table we finished overall 4th out of 33 countries.

A well run event enjoyed by all.

15th/16th July The Bard's Bash – Stratford upon Avon

A new event (no prizes for guessing where the name came from) run by Chris Buxton and his team at King Edward's School Stratford we had both individual and mixed handicapped team events. This was followed by a barbeque in Graham Paul and Janet's extensive garden. The weather could have been a little kinder to us but everyone seemed to enjoy themselves.

12/13th August – The German Match

20 vets decided they wanted to take part in this event held in Munster and hosted by the German Federation.

I believe that the Germans won overall but I recall a couple of memorable, and unusual (given it's Germany) sabre team victories

.

Veterans Winton Cup 23rd/24th September

Probably the most popular event on the calendar with 10 Sections competing, with the mighty South East coming out on top. The Gala dinner organised by Marcia and Gillian was well attended. Many thanks especially to Marcia as event organiser, John Crouch and Phil for DT, Peter and Janet Huggins and all who put so much time in to make this a success.

Veteran World Championships Florida 11th-16th October

Always the highlight of the season Daytona hosted an excellent tournament. 13 countries participated and GBR finished 5th with 18 medals including one Gold from Georgina Usher

So it's safe to say that we had a pretty successful event and a very enjoyable one too.

Watching satellites being launched from Cape Kennedy from the beach certainly helped make it a memorable trip.

Leading up to Daytona we organised a series of sports psychology seminars for the whole squad. They were very interesting and informative sessions that the attendees all appreciated.

Royal Navy Match 26th November

The annual Vets v Navy match was this year held in London on HMS President on the Thames by the Tower of London but this year it was a triangular as Royal Holloway University London were invited to take part. I believe it was a well fought and competitive match with the vets just prevailing and the Navy a close second. Many thanks to our own Lt Cdr Rubin Nash for the organisation.

As can be seen above, 2023 was a busy year with plenty of events for our members to be involved in and, as I said last year, its very difficult thanking individuals for the work and expertise they put in to make our organisation run smoothly because I am bound to miss someone and for that I apologise up front. Although I've already mentioned some of them in all the events above we were indebted to Gillian for coordinating our international events, Pete and Janet Huggins, Mike and Lyn Robinson for the DT and organisation, Graham Paul, and

Marcia, and of course Luce who keeps us all well informed. I've been very fortunate to have such an experienced and committed team of people around to make things work.

Unfortunately I have to mention the passing of our founder Henry De Silva. Although he actually passed in 2024 I was made aware of his illness in late 2023. Without him we either would not be in existence or certainly not as advanced as we are in both the UK and across the world.

In another challenging year my thanks go to your committee Kola Ayanwale, Gillian Aghajan, Paul Baillache, Beth Cranston- Selby, Graham Paul, Lucy Wright, Jane Huchison and Naomi Donaldson .

And last, but not least, on behalf of all the committee thanks to the continued support of all our members in what has been a very busy year.

Carl

Carl Morris
President BVF

April 2024

Secretary's Report for AGM 2024

Seven Committee meetings have been held since the last AGM, predominantly via Zoom, but we also held one physical meeting at Swindon which proved very productive. Using Zoom has the advantage of a reduced carbon footprint and reduced expenses, but physical meetings give a better forum to debate complex topics and develop relationships within the committee.

Newsletters and general updates were sent throughout the year using Mailchimp. Gillian has taken over from Nicola producing the newsletter which is widely appreciated by members – particularly the caption competition! Surveys were sent out after competitions using Survey Monkey. Feedback from the surveys has been discussed by the committee with a view to improving the standard of events.

Competition rules have been updated and selection criteria have been changed this season to allow our world champion to defend her title – which was a pleasurable decision.

The last twelve months saw Henry de Silva celebrate his 90th birthday shortly followed by the fencing community mourning his death. A minute's silence was held on each day of the Nationals in his memory. The veterans movement owes much to Henry, who was a real force of nature and who will be much missed.

Special thanks go to John Mason who continues to help with the website, the entry system and database training. John is the rock behind the system which makes everything work and his input is both appreciated and invaluable.

Thank you for all your support over the last year and I look forward to communicating with you all over the next 12 months.

Lucy Wright

2024

Membership Summary for 2023

	Men	Women	Total
This year	418	181	599
New Members	41	21	62
Not Renewed	68	20	88

By Category

	Men	Women	Total	%
Cat 1 (40-49)	69	41	110	18
Cat 2 (50-59)	135	57	192	32
Cat 3 (60-69)	130	55	185	31
Cat 4 (70-79)	54	23	77	13
Cat 5 (80+)	28	5	33	6

By Home Country

	Total	%
	1	0
ENG	454	76
WAL	46	8
SCO	46	8
NI	12	2
CI	14	2
IOM	1	0
None	25	4

How does this compare to 2022?

We finished the year with 4 more members. Men's membership had dropped a little but women's numbers had increased.

There were 88 members who did not renew. The Age Groups were run by an external agency (Leon Paul). It was held as an Open at the end of February and the beginning of March and as an Open, fencers didn't need to be members. This may have affected renewals as many people are reminded to renew at the time of entering BVF run events.

We finished the year with 4 more members. Men's membership had dropped a little but women's numbers had increased.

Numbers in Cat 1 had likewise decreased for men but increased for women
Cat 2 slightly down for both on last year

Cat 3 increased slightly for both

Cat 4 Last year membership was shown for ages 70-74 only and numbers are virtually the same this year.

In this table I have shown ages 70-79 which is 13% of the membership.

Members who are 80 years and over are 5% of the membership but do not have a separate category to fence in so continue to fence with the 70+ fencers.

England is still the largest Home country with 453 members and makes up 76% of the membership. Wales and Scotland have 46 members each.

Northern Ireland 12 members, Channel Islands 14 and the Isle of Man had 1 who was Henry who sadly died during the year.

Jane Hutchison
Membership

Treasurer's Report on the BVF 2023 Accounts.

This report covers the accounts for the year 2023, and comments on the ongoing finances of BVF. It is assumed the reader has read the accounts and supporting notes.

I would like to thank Joanne Yeates who is performing an independent examination of the accounts.

Headline result

Reserves have increased by £10,011, £7,600 from the excess of subscriptions over administration costs and £2,400 from the various events that have been run or supported.

2023 Accounts

Because the Guildford event creates income and expenses before the end of the year for the event held in the following year, the accounts show significant receipts and prepayments for the 2024 event and accruals brought forward from 2022, which necessarily complicate the figures presented, and the bank balances are therefore not representative of the actual level of BVF's reserves.

I have therefore included a table showing the movement in reserves from one year to the next, showing the contribution from each event which is clearer and of more use for members.

(a) Subscriptions and Administration

Subscription income has held up in 2023. We anticipate an increase in new 40+ members now that the World Championships will be open to them from 2025.

Overall general administration costs have risen slightly in 2023 compared to 2022, partly from the cost of web services. The committee has met by Zoom in 2023 apart from one physical meeting. Virtual meetings have allowed the committee to meet more often and at short notice to discuss specific issues. It is planned to continue this approach in 2024.

Directors & Officers insurance was renewed for 2023/24. Licences for web services such as Survey Monkey, MailChimp, and Zoom were renewed, and these amount to a material cost of running BVF.

(b) Events

EVF Guildford made a surplus of £4949. This is due to a number of factors which are non-repeatable. Firstly, Welsh Fencing lent us most of the scoring equipment for free. This was a one-off and we will not be able to use the Welsh kit again as it is no longer being lent out. The cost saved was estimated to be c£2800. In addition, we secured a discount on other kit hired which was worth c£1200 which again we cannot anticipate in future. Therefore, the underlying event surplus was c£1000.

Guildford is the most complex and expensive event we organise – there is significant cost of referees, accommodation for officials, and good quality equipment. By comparison I can announce that for the recent event in 2024, where fuller costs were incurred and many costs were higher due to inflation, and despite borrowing some kit from Kent Fencing at low cost, we made a surplus of less than £1000. We anticipate even higher costs for the 2025 event.

The **Age Groups** event was run by the Leon Paul Fencing Centre on behalf of BVF, who therefore took any any profit or loss. This arrangement will not be repeated in 2024, as we are holding this event in the Midlands to ensure a wider geographical spread of our events.

The **BVF Nationals** were held at the Manchester Fencing Centre, and cost £1035, this loss is acceptable and in line with previous years. This event incurs high referee and officials costs as we need more hotels and pay some travel costs.

The **Winton Cup** made a small profit of c£480 , as we had full attendance by all teams, and venue cost was lower than the previous year. Also, kit hire cost was reduced thanks to Kent County Fencing kindly renting us kit. Thanks to Marcia Stretch for carefully managing the costs of this event.

The **European Individual Championships** made a surplus of c£1200. This is because the participant levies exceeded team manager costs, due to a large attendance and slightly lower costs. The surplus will be used to cover team manager costs at future international events.

The cost of the **World Championships** was c£2300. This includes c£1100 spent by BVF on pre-Worlds training courses (discussed later), leaving an underlying cost of c£1200 - this is because BVF covers the team entry fees and the team manager costs not covered by participant levies. Costs were higher this year because the event was in Florida rather than Europe.

A new event, the **Bards Bash**, was added to the calendar in 2023. This event was run by Shakespeare Swords, however BVF collected the entry fees on their behalf, so the event is shown in our accounts. The small loss represents some costs associated with the social BBQ that was held by BVF.

Across all events in 2023 BVF has continued to see the odd withdrawal due to Covid and other reasons for which refunds have been given where appropriate. Given the rising costs on our domestic events, it is unlikely that refunds can be given in future other than for injury .

(c) Ad-hoc use of reserves in 2023

Following requests from fencers the Committee decided to fund some fencing specific training for the squad attending the World Championships. This included heavily subsidising an on-line course in sports psychology, and covering room hire costs for further training sessions during the Winton Cup weekend. This cost c£1100. This activity was a one-off as most of the fencers who took part will likely attend future world championships.

The Committee also decided to make a small contribution to the travel costs of those participating in the German match in Munster, costing £800.

(d) Other

No disbursements were made from the Dennis Hunt Fund established in 2021 to facilitate support of sabre related causes. A separate donation was received for £700.

BVF agreed in 2022 to establish a 'hardship fund' to support members in difficulty by covering entry fees. Whilst no specific sum has been put aside, requests will be considered as they arise, and one free entry was granted to Guildford 2023.

The future

(i) Subscriptions

The subscription rate of £15 has been unchanged for many years and should probably have been increased by now. However, BVF finances remain in good health, and administration costs are well below the subscriptions received, enabling surplus to be generated. We have no immediate plans to increase subscriptions, but it remains a possibility if finances deteriorate.

(ii) Entry fees

We maintained fees at £45 in 2023 (and 2024) across all events. We will try and avoid increases; however, we will have to react to significant increases in competition running costs. Entry fees for EVF Guildford are set in line with EVF rules.

(iii) Medals stock

New medals are now produced with a new supplier. BVF will order on demand, and only hold supplies sufficient to cover the next few years. The remaining 'old' medal stock (value c£500) from the previous supplier will be run down where possible, and eventually written off if not usable.

(iv) Future Events

The most significant costs of events are venue, refereeing, and equipment hire. We have been fortunate that Welsh Fencing and Kent Fencing have loaned us so much equipment for little or no cost. This has effectively given windfall surpluses on a number of events. BVF is immensely grateful for this, and wishes to thank Welsh Fencing, and Lyn Robinson in particular, and Kent Fencing, through Peter Huggins, for this support. This arrangement cannot be relied on in future of course and equipment hire costs may increase.

We have seen all competition costs rise in the current economic climate, and we have seen rapid increases in venue and hotel costs. An example is the Winton Cup – we have had to find a new venue for 2024, and many potential venues wanted to charge 3 or 4 times what we paid in the past.

It is highly likely that we will make losses on events this year and have to subsidise them from reserves. In 2024 we have the European Team Championships in Belgium, where BVF pays for the entry fees, and the World Championships in Dubai where BVF costs are expected to be much higher than usual.

(v) Level of BVF Reserves

The level of reserves is very healthy, at £59,000. BVF will continue to aim to maintain reserves each year by trying to break even on every event, whilst covering any losses from the excess of subscriptions over administration costs. BVF may also choose to subsidise small non-ranking social fencing events, or other initiatives, and we did this in 2023 to the tune of c£2200.

Members may question what such reserves are then needed for. BVF last hosted a major international event at Medway in 2016 for the European Team Championships, and the World Championships in Bath in 2006. Whilst there are no immediate plans to host events like these, should BVF do so, the financial commitment would be material and it is therefore prudent to build up our finances beforehand.

Conclusion

BVF remains in good financial health. In 2023 normal service has been resumed across all competitions and activities. BVF is not immune to the increase in costs due to inflation, and it is expected that it will become increasingly more challenging to run events cost effectively.

Paul Baillache, Treasurer BVF

29th March 2024