

# British Veterans Fencing

## President's Report

This has been another strong and active year for British Veterans Fencing.

Membership has remained virtually static with a year-end figure of 621 being just 6 down on 2024. But a greater interest being shown by Cat 1 fencers with the news of World Championship inclusion.

### Domestic Season

Leading into our international events, our domestic competitions were all well attended and successfully delivered:

- National Championships – Manchester (the last to be held there)
- Guildford
- Age Group Championships – Nottingham

These events continue to form the backbone of our competitive structure and provide the pathway into international selection.

### European Championships – Plovdiv, Bulgaria (May)

We fielded a team of 85 GB fencers.

The team achieved excellent results, including:

- 6 Individual Gold Medallists. Paul Wedge, Greg Allen, Sheila Anderson, Georgina Usher and Jenny Morris.
- Multiple strong performances across weapons and age categories

A tremendous effort from the entire squad. Well done to all who represented Great Britain.

### World Championships – Bahrain (October)

As always, a very tough event.

Our results included:

- Splendid gold for Paul Wedge - adding to his gold at the European Championships
- Women's Team Épée – a brilliant gold
- 4 Individual Bronze Medals
- Team Bronzes in:
  - Women's Sabre
  - Women's Foil
  - Men's Foil

These are outstanding achievements at world level and reflect the depth and competitiveness of British veteran fencing.

I should also give a special mention to Jane Hutchison and Viv Frith for winning European Fencer of the Year in their respective categories.

## **Finance**

We made a small loss this year. However, overall finances remain healthy despite investing in a new website. The old one was beginning to creak and, without the guiding hand of John Mason, this felt like the right time to modernise. It is more versatile and has allowed us to address better ways of renewing subscriptions and competition entry.

That said, we anticipate tougher conditions ahead. Rising cost is becoming increasingly challenging and we cannot ignore the direction of travel.

The cost of running events has increased significantly, particularly:

- Venue hire
- Referee fees and expenses
- Equipment transport and storage

Paul's Treasurer's report covers this in more detail but these increases are structural, not temporary. Venue providers in particular are raising rates year on year, and referee costs reflect both market pressures and the need to maintain appropriate standards at our competitions.

For that reason, we are proposing a rise in membership fees. This is the first increase in many years. The committee have not taken this decision lightly, but believe it to be necessary to ensure future sustainability. We believe this to be a measured step that will allow us to remain financially secure while continuing to provide strong domestic events and support for international competition.

## **Social**

Competition results and medalling internationally is an important part of veterans fencing and whilst our results have been more than creditable given the size of our participating members relative to other countries, what should set us apart from other areas of the UK fencing community is the social aspect of veterans fencing. Many members have been friends over many years and enjoy the opportunity to meet up, socialise and make new friends. Apart from a very successful dinner at the Winton Cup and a small meeting after The Bard's Bash I don't feel that this aspect of our organisation has been too successful and I am open to suggestions how this could be improved. It has been suggested that a separate social committee might generate more activity here so if anyone has any thoughts on that please contact me or anyone on the committee as we are open to any ideas.

## **Acknowledgements**

It was a sad year in that we lost two of our longest serving and most supportive members:

- **John Crouch**
- **John Mason**

Their contribution to veteran fencing over many years cannot be overstated.

I would also like to thank –

- Graham Paul as Chair of Selectors and his team of
  - Gillian Worman and Nick Mort – Foil
  - Marj Oniye and Neal Mallett – Epee
  - Jane Hutchison and Chris Prevett - Sabre
- Theo Ayawale, who has provided valuable support on the committee over the past few years and has decided to stand down this year
- Lucy Wright, who in addition to her secretarial duties has devoted, and is still devoting, an enormous amount of time to the new website
- Gillian Aghajan who does such a professional job as EVF rep and Chef de mission.
- All members of the committee who have supported me throughout the year

## **Closing**

Membership is holding steady. International results are strong. Our domestic events remain well supported. While financial pressures are increasing, the organisation remains healthy and forward-looking.

Thank you to everyone who continues to make British Veterans Fencing what it is.

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