



The Vets

February 2007 Volume XX Issue 2

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www.veterans-fencing.co.uk

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Leon Paul

Tragedy at Inaugural Four Nations Competition

Veteran fencers from Scotland, All Ireland, Wales and England gathered at Wrexham at the weekend of 27th/28th January to compete in teams of three at each weapon, for the inaugural competition organised by The Welsh Veterans Fencing Association.

On Saturday, with the first matches being played, tragedy struck during the Men's Sabre match between Scotland and Wales when Welsh sabreur Justin Smith collapsed having finished a fight and as the score was being given.

An ambulance was called, and Justin received immediate skilled attention from a doctor, two surgeons and a nurse who were competing at the event, until the arrival of the ambulance which took him to hospital for further assistance. Sadly the fencers were informed later that Justin had died at the hospital.

It was felt that Justin, who enjoyed his fencing so much, would have wanted the event to continue and it was therefore decided to resume the competition, albeit with a strong feeling of sadness in evidence from everyone present, and as a mark of respect, with Wales withdrawing their teams for the remainder of the matches that day.

The foil and sabre matches were played on Saturday with Epee on Sunday and the competition was run using Italian Relay scoring with a significant number of the matches, at all weapons, producing very close results.

Men's Foil saw England 1st, Scotland 2nd and Wales and All Ireland equal 3rd and in the Women's Foil England were 1st, Wales 2nd and Ireland and Scotland equal 3rd.

In the Men's Epee, Wales were victorious, England 2nd, All Ireland 3rd and Scotland 4th whilst the Women's Epee saw England 1st, All Ireland 2nd and equal 3rd for Scotland and Wales.

Men's Sabre had England 1st, Scotland 2nd and Wales and All Ireland equal 3rd and in Women's Sabre England again took 1st, Wales 2nd and All Ireland and Scotland equal 3rd.

The England team emerged overall victors, with Wales second and the teams from Scotland and All Ireland tying equal third. As a mark of respect for Justin, it has been decided to name the event "The Justin Smith Trophy"

The Welsh Vets organised a Gala Dinner for the Saturday at the Ramada Hotel, which was attended by the Deputy Mayor of Wrexham and her husband.

Congratulations must be given to The Welsh Veterans Fencing Association for the really excellent organisation of the weekend, and I am sure that all members of the NVA join with us in sending our condolences to the Welsh fencers and to the family of Justin Smith.

FSLM

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OBITUARY: Justin Smith aged 52

Justin tragically died whilst on the piste fencing in the inaugural 4 Nations Veterans Fencing Competition on Saturday 27th January 2007.

Justin was the Welsh Veterans Competition Secretary and Chairman of Swansea Fencing Club.

He was passionate about his fencing, a happy, smiling man. It was lovely to be in his company.

Justin will be sadly missed by all that knew him. He leaves a wife, Dian and children. All our thoughts are with his family.

Mike Norfolk.



Letters to the Editor - TIME FOR CHANGE?

Dear Linda

Re changing the name of VETERANS

I am not against progress, but when the name of "Veterans" has proved successful why change it?

By the Oxford Dictionary "Veteran" means "One who has a long record of service in a given activity or capacity of long experience" Nearly all sports are Veterans.

Table tennis has over 3,000 members. Master in golf is for the top professional. We already have British Masters the B.A.F

In my early days I got sponsors and John Croxon got lottery money for the European Veterans. We have European Veteran and Commonwealth Veterans.

To change the name to some other name will mean everybody's direct debit will have to change with the bank.

The tracksuit will be obsolete. The logo I find simple and neat.

A good promotion folder and a good PR person would get the sponsorship needed.

You have to sell the product for the good of the N.V.A and the buyer.

Although I started the Veterans we need to progress, not all progress is for the benefit of members.

Henry de Silva

p.s we had well over 150 to 200 members in the first 10 years. We had over 40 in the first 3 years

Dear Member

There will be a proposal at the AGM to change the name of our association.

Whatever your opinion, please come along to the meeting and vote so that we can say with confidence that the membership has made its decision.

I look forward to seeing you there.

Friday March 9th, 8:15pm in the Holiday Inn, Gloucester.

John Mason

Re-branding of the NVA - A time for change.

I have read the arguments in the NVA newsletter. I have also sat in the pub and tossed the arguments around with fencing friends and I feel this is a time for a change.

Although I didn't start fencing until I had just reached veteran age, I do still fence in many opens and with lots of youngsters. I find my self talking about the Veterans and get sniggers and remarks about Zimmer frames and boozy weekends away partying. I know these images are not what I want people to believe the veterans is about.

Yes, we do need increase our membership. The fact that the World Champs are not open to fencers under 50 might put some people off bothering but there are many other opportunities on the European circuit that many don't know about for fencers once they reach 40. It is this age of fencer that we need to attract, and I believe it is this age group that are being put off by the name 'veteran'.

Malcolm C. mentions Veterans and Runners. Many organisations are going though just the rebranding exercise we are. Runners now come under the umbrella of the British Masters Athletic Federation with age categories only referred to as vet 40, vet 50 etc. Sounds good to me.

Henry started a fabulous organisation which has grown and grown in my opinion by word of mouth not by advertising. However with this growth has come change and the organisation

has to cater for the highly competitive fencer and the social fencer.

We have evolved. Staging the World Championships is proof of that. I see that event as a dawning of a new era for the Vets. We are now on the world stage and have been noticed as a competitive and a very able organisation. This is a perfect platform for a re-launch; new name, new logo new image.

I was interested to read Dave's definitions from the International Masters Games Association and the EMSA. I feel the term Master is one that we can use and should be allowed to use to describe ourselves and I do not see a problem with us using it in our name.

Jane Hutchison

RE-IMAGING THE NVA

I thought I would contribute to the discussion on the re-imagining of the NVA. I realise this is an issue some people feel very strongly about and I am concerned that much time and possible conflict will arise. The NVA has grown to become an influential and successful part of British Fencing. It would be a shame to divert effort into a name change at the expense of growing the sport. I realise that NVA means little to those outside of the sport and the problem needs addressing, but it should not be seen as a vital issue. Looking at a change of name, we should probably go back to first principles and ask what is it we are doing? We are British Fencers

over 40 years of age. Hence the title should use the words "British" and "fencing". As to how we differentiate our age group, I appreciate that veteran does conjure up an image of doddering pensioners. However the title "Masters" also carries connotations of expert, professional or high performer. This might well put off the less able of us who only want to compete for fun. I believe that there is no ideal name or someone would already have come up with it. Personally, I think that the term "Senior" best delineates and describes what we are. (ie British Seniors Fencing)

Whilst we are discussing re-imagining, I think a more serious issue is the format for the National Championships. We have now come up with a complicated format for this year's championships to overcome the perceived problems of the current system. There is a perfectly satisfactory format used by all competitions and one that we should also use – two rounds of poules followed by a complete DE. Home competitions, the World Championships and the European Championships use this format and we have the associated computer software to ensure smooth running. I can see no reason not to change other than an appeal to tradition.

So by all means look at re-imagining, but do not waste too much time on incidentals such as name and logo, but at least come up to date in the way we run our national event.

John Crouch

Dear Linda,

UK Sport's Major Events Team supports one-off events and I approached them in 2005 with a view of getting support for the 2006 World Veterans Fencing Championships.

They rejected my approach then saying that their budget was only £1.6m that demand for funds outstrips supply and their policy was not to support veterans events.

I called them again this month and asked whether they would support a World Masters Fencing Championships if we decided to hold such an event. They said that they did not support Masters events either.

So a name change won't bring in funding from this source.

The only reason for fund-raising is to hold events (the NVA has enough money to fund its day-to-day operations). The event organiser can choose the name of the event to maximise its appeal, unless the name is dictated by the FIE for example. The name of our association is not actually relevant. The debate on the change of name has been extended to include recruitment. My own club has 16 NVA members. I believe that a new fencer would look at the NVA members within the club, see

that they are fencers of ability and influence within the sport and see their enthusiasm and commitment. I do not believe that they would then be dissuaded to join the NVA because of the name.

Best Regards,
John Mason

Hi Linda

Some thoughts about the proposed name change:

It does seem a bit odd that our current name does not include either our sport or our nationality. I would support such a change if the benefits can be seen to outweigh the disadvantages.

The name "NVA" carries international recognition and esteem, particularly since our successful hosting of the World Championships. I am reluctant to risk the inevitable downside of a loss of that identity, without a guaranteed return.

I do not agree with the argument about potential sponsors who are put off by veterans. You would have to be a *pretty stupid* potential sponsor if you
a) wish to avoid sponsoring veterans, but

b) fall for a veteran organisation simply because its name attempts to conceal its status.

I have read with respect and agreement the arguments against "Masters" put forward by Robin Davenport, Lawrence Bunnage and Malcolm Cawton. I would like to add one of my own: it seems to me a retrograde step to swap a unisex title ("Veterans") for a gender-specific title ("Masters"). Would that make all female members "Mistresses"?

If the name is to change, I would prefer to see a change which acknowledges the whole of our membership for what we are: British Fencing Veterans.

Hilary Arnold

More food for Thought!

Veterans at one time would never have been thought to refer to any one but male, also within the context of the military as well. This is a first class example of how the word has developed to include not only people outside of the military setting and also now it seems to include women. The same would go for masters, new meaning, all encompassing.
ANON

I have been doing a little research. I found the paragraph below quite interesting. I note that the title "The British Federation of Fencing Masters" became known as the "British Academy of Fencing" in 1949. So that's 56 years since it has been used. I think we can use Masters now.

I looked up a definition of Veterans in various tomes. Chambers quotes: One who has seen long service, one old or long experienced in any activity. So that doesn't cover people over 40 new to fencing any more than 'masters' does.

I think what we are seeing is a move to reinvent the word 'Masters'. It does not mean the same today as it did 50 years ago and why should it. Words are evolving all the time that's why the Oxford dictionary scholars are changing words and definitions daily. We are not the only sports organisation to consider using the word and I think it may be the start of a move towards general usage of the word in a new way.

Name and Address Supplied

British Academy of Fencing

The British Academy of Fencing is an organisation for fencing coaches in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Its origins go back to 1540, when King Henry VIII issued a bill (or Warrant signed by the Sovereign and directed to the Lord Chancellor for passing Letters Patent under the Great Seal) under the title "Masters of ye Noble Science of Defence". This still exists at the Public Records Office C.82/770).

The Bill gave Masters a monopoly of teaching fencing in England and empowered them to commit to goal any offender who taught without being a member of the Guild.

When Henry VIII died in 1547 this monopoly lapsed and it was not renewed. However, the Ancient Masters recovered their lawful privileges from a sympathetic James I. On the 1st July 1605 he granted them a Warrant (Rymer's Foedera Vol.XVI). This Warrant was abolished when James I was forced to pass the Monopolies Act 21 Cop. III in 1623/24.

During the Restoration the body fell into disrepute because of the so-called "Masters" who did not ply their prizes (a traditional examination which required the fighting and defeating of their betters). These swordsmen merely gave themselves the title of "Master" or "Professor" and were in fact, nothing more than paid prizefighters with swords and were the forerunners of pugilists.

From then on the decline was rapid and to all extents the body ceased to exist, although some Fencing Masters managed to earn a living in the country.

In 1903 the Guild was reformed under the title "The London Académie d'Armes", and again in 1931 under the title "The British Federation of Fencing Masters".

During the Second World War it hibernated, but in 1949 an Ancient Guild of Fencing Masters was again refounded as "The British Academy of Fencing". The inspiration for this venture came from the late Charles de Beaumont and it was implemented by Professor Roger Crosnier, Professor Leon Paul and Mr. J.D. Aylward. The Academy's first President was Professor Leon Bertrand. The British Academy of Fencing (B.A.F.) is a founder member of the Academie d'Armes Internationale – the international federation of fencing academies.

SUGGESTIONS FOR RENAMING THE NVA

In order that the full number of names suggested by members can be properly listed and displayed at the AGM the closing date for suggestions is **Thursday 1st March 2007**.

If you have a suggestions for a name please ensure that you send it to David Sweeney before the closing date.

D. Sweeney, Hop Mill Cottage, Painswick Road, Salmon springs, Stroud, GL6 6LE.

Email: mrdswweeney@hotmail.com or NVChairman@veterans-fencing.co.uk

Veterans Fencing Events Abroad

As many of you are aware, as well as the European Championships, there are now several open veterans tournaments abroad.

France, Germany, Italy and Spain all have several opens tournaments for veterans. I hope to be able to put together several trips so that many of our members can not only participate in events at peer level internationally but can take the opportunity to explore several cities in Europe. More information will appear in the Next Newsletter.

Dave Sweeney

HOTEL BOOKING FOR THE NATIONALS

A word of warning: One of our members found it difficult to book a room using the number below. You must insist that we have a group booking or they tell you there are no rooms available. If in doubt use the option that puts you through to the hotel directly and not the central booking facility.

We have an accommodation deal at the Holiday Inn, Crest Way, Barnwood, Gloucester, GL4 3RX
0870 400 9034. Single : £50.00 per night B&B Double: £35.00 per Person per night B&B
Please quote: NVA Veterans Fencing Group booking.

The Great Name Debate

I have read with interest the letters regarding the re-branding of our association and a possible name change.

There are some members, as one would expect, who are resistant to a name change on the grounds of history and perceived respect in the fencing world. A change in name will not affect our standing in the fencing world; we will still be who we are as individuals and collectively the body representing over 40s fencing in the UK. The respect is vested and been earned by members both now and in the past who have worked at home and abroad to establish bonds, to broadcast what we are doing and developing fencing internationally. The cause has been helped in no small way by our own Commonwealth, European and World Champions and our squads taking part in international competition.

As I have pointed out above, I do not believe there is a downside risk to a name change. At least with a better image those who are committed to doing all they can, for the benefit of our association, would have a better chance of success. Even with a spectacular name and image package we would still have to work very hard to achieve success, there is no such thing as a free lunch. Sponsor needs the right image with which to associate their company's

marketing strategies and it would appear that our current name and image is not in tune with their strategies.

Several people have pointed out that we have, in the past, had success in obtaining central grant aid. It is a sad fact that funding from this source will be more difficult to obtain in the future. UK Sport has issued a Modernisation Programme initiative and one of its goals is to encourage sports governing bodies to become more financially independent. Any funding that may become available will be even less likely to be made available to our association. We need to look more and more to our own efforts to achieve funding, when and where needed, from the commercial world.

The main point of re-branding, including a change of name, is to allow us to project a better image to the outside world. Of the names up to now suggested for consideration most point to having the words 'British and Fencing' in our name, this surely indicates a need for change.

Let us seize the opportunity to make a step change in the development of our association by choosing a new name that will take us into the future and not leave us lagging behind the pack. I have come to believe that such a name is

British Masters Fencing.

Dave Sweeney

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS 2007
17th 20th May 2007
St.Gallen, Switzerland

Full details have now been received from the organisers of the 2007 European Championships. The information can be seen on their website www.fecht-em.ch. All entries from England, Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man, the Channel Islands and Wales must be made via the NVA.

Accommodation has been reserved at the Best Western Hotel Walhalla, St.Gallen which is 15 minute walk from the fencing venue and 5 minutes walk from the old town.

Travel is by flight to Zurich and then by train, from Zurich airport, to St.Gallen. The trains run every 30 minutes and the journey time is approximately 60 minutes.

There are convenient flights from Heathrow and Gatwick given below. There are direct flights with BA and Swiss Air from Birmingham, Bristol, and Manchester. Easyjet offer flights to Basel - Mulhouse from Liverpool, London and Stansted but beware Easyjet will charge £31 extra for fencing bags. Trains from Mulhouse take about 2 hours and involve 2 or 3 changes. Group flight deals have been investigated but it has proved considerably cheaper to book directly on the internet. If you do not have access to the internet Dave Sweeney will be pleased to make arrangements for you.

Cheapest and most convenient flights

British Airways Heathrow - Zurich

Outbound - depart London Heathrow 11:55 arrive Zurich 14:35 - current internet price £99

Return depart Zurich 13:20 arrive London Heathrow 14:15

Swiss Airlines Heathrow to Zurich

Outbound - depart London Heathrow 13:50 arrive Zurich 16:35 - current internet price £89

Return - depart Zurich Airport 15:40 arrive London Heathrow 16:20

British Airways Gatwick to Zurich

Outbound - depart London Gatwick 08:15 arrive Zurich 10:55 - current internet price £61

Return - depart Zurich airport 11:30 arrive London Gatwick 12:10

Travel and Accommodation budgeting information

Flights see above	£90 (depending on flight/airport selected)
Transfer by train	£21 return Zurich airport – St.Gallen – Zurich airport (internet price)
Accommodation at the Best Western Hotel Walhalla on a B&B basis	
Single	£60 per person per night
Double /Twin	£40 per person per night
Entry fee	£20 per weapon
Gala Dinner	£35 per person
NVA levy	£20 per competitor (to cover costs of referees etc)
Administration costs	£5 per person travelling

Enclosed with this Newsletter you will find details and rules of the Championships and an entry and accommodation request form. The hotel reservation has to be confirmed, with rooming list, by 23rd March 2007 at the latest. If you intend to take part in the Championships please complete the entry form and return it to David Sweeney as soon as possible but **before 16th March 2007**. All accommodation requests will be treated on a first come first served basis. If you would like any further information please contact Dave Sweeney, Tel: 01453 758372 or by email at mrdswweeney@hotmail.com .

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2007

**MARCH 9-11 AGM and NVA
Championships**

GLI Leisure Centre Gloucester

Friday: Sabre Saturday: Foil Sunday: Epée

APRIL 28-29

**NVA Age Group Qualifiers
Stantonbury Campus, Milton Keynes**

Note date change!

MAY 17-20

**European Veterans Individual
Championships, St Gallen, Switzerland**

**NO SELECTION REQUIRED, OPEN.
ALL FENCERS WELCOME AND
ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND....**

Details this newsletter

<http://www.fecht-em.ch/>

JUNE 2-3

**BATH Unisex Sabre (2nd) and BATH
Unisex Foil (3rd)**

Note date change!

JUNE 15-17

**GBR vs Germany, Berlin, Germany
Selection based on NVA Selection Rules**

JUNE 24

**Dunstan Epée and Foil, Glastonbury
OPEN**

JULY 13 - 15

**Commonwealth Veterans Championships,
Toronto, Canada
Individual OPEN.**

Team selected by Home Countries.

Note date change!

Details in a later newsletter

**September 14-16
World Championships
Sydney Australia**

**September 30
Middlesex Veterans Unisex Epee
Individuals OPEN**

**OCTOBER 7 SUNDAY
Veterans Team Challenge, Loughborough
NO selection required, OPEN. Teams put
together on the day.**

NOTABLES TOP HALF OR LAST 32

JANUARY 07		
ALDERSHOT OPEN		MF (89)
18 January	14	Brian Causton
	23	Tony Conyard
		ME (102)
	5	Howard West
	8	Anton Pollard
	15	Steve Lavington
	23	Steve Tatner
		WE (36)
	6	Jenny Morris
IRISH OPEN		WE (15)
23 January	J3	Fiona Haldane
PLYMOUTH OPEN		MF (43)
27/28 January	15	Jonathan Dawkins
		WF (25)
	6	Dawn Townsend
	7	Astrid Merrick
		ME (38)
	J3	Steve Lavington
		WE (20)
	2	Lynne Bornemisza
		MS (25)
	8	Andy Bornemisza