



The Vets

January 2007 Volume XX Issue 1

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HAVE FENCING BAG: WILL TRAVEL!!!!

On the 28th October 2006, a group of eight NVA members gathered at Heathrow for a fencing trip to Mexico.

The party was led by Henry de Silva (who else!) and included Sasha Akoulichev, Tony Bardell, Dawne Bird, Derek Collier, Pressy Madrangca, Mick Meyer and Bob Turner.

Henry had been trying to plan the visit for some time and the original itinerary included Argentina, though the logistics eventually made this impossible. Henry's daughter, Tessa, proved to be the crucial player in the undoubted success of the Mexican adventure. Living in the country, she was able to sort out all the local travel and accommodation.

The flight was long and tiring, via New York, Houston, and then down to Acapulco, some 18/20 hours. However, the party seemed in high spirits throughout and got on very well with each other, a feature of numerous other Veterans events over the years

Once in Mexico we were driven along the coast to the resort of Acapulco for a night's rest and recovery in a beachside apartment. The evening's entertainment included a visit to watch the famous cliff divers launching themselves some one hundred feet into the swirling and frothing ocean!

The following morning, the party headed to the coach station for a five and a half hour journey up into the mountains towards Mexico City, with its population of 23 million.

On arrival, following a smooth and scenic journey which reminded some of us of travelling inland towards Granada in Spain (the Spanish invaders must have felt quite at home all those years earlier), we arrived at our accommodation, right in the middle of the historic centre of Mexico City, the Zocalo, very near to the massive Cathedral Square.

We were booked into a Youth Hostel situated in a modernised 17th century building, in four rooms, with breakfast included for the princely sum of £8 per night, which allowed more scope for seeking out some really atmospheric and well known local restaurants, complete with traditional music.

Once recovered and more used to the altitude at some 7,500 feet, Henry and Tessa sought out the local fencers and an evening reception was arranged for us by the British Embassy, hosted by the Ambassador, Jeremy Paxman's older brother. Apparently, we were one of very few sporting groups to have been entertained recently, though Robbie Williams and his entourage had been earlier visitors and the Pet Shop Boys had also been in town!

(cont)

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The actual fencing was quite limited, though good fun, mostly against University students, and included one day fencing outdoors in a local park.

Prior to returning back to Acapulco, the group was lucky to witness the famous festival of the dead which involved massive carnivals and street entertainment going on long into the night. However, one of the highlights of the visit for five of the group was the day's visit to the world famous 'pyramids' and temple ruins at Teotihuacan.

Overall, the trip was a great success and enjoyed by everyone, the only downside being provided by the US Customs and Immigration officials in high tech Houston where the computer systems were down, leading to three of the party failing to board our return flight (Henry, Pressy and Dawne).

On arrival at Gatwick, the rest of the party were to discover that none of the baggage had been put on the flight either! The missing three were put on a later flight via Paris and Henry had to travel onto Finland for a weeks coaching minus all his equipment.

Long may the Veterans continue to arrange such trips and visits as part of their activities!

Bob Turner

**Henry is on his travels again, to Japan in February.
Please contact him directly if you would like to go (phone number on the front page).**

Review of the World Vets DVD

BATH 2006

Richard Bonehill really is a true professional.

This super DVD will take you back, if you were there, or take you there if you could not attend, the

World Championships: Bath 2006.

And remember that every one of you helped make it happen.

What a week that was. Richard has produced a CD that will remind you of all that happened that week.

The professionally produced CD shows funny bits, serious bits, as well as the opening and closing ceremonies that were so well received. Also included are full results.

Many of you asked us to produce this CD, so order your copy from Richard and make sure you have a memory of that week.

Full of musical tracks and people we know, this really will be a lasting memory.

I for one will never forget this event; the CD really brought it back to me, the fun, the long hours, and yes my aching feet....

Thanks Richard for putting this together.

Get your copy now!

Linda Lawes

WORLDS DVD

World Veterans Fencing Championships, Bath 2006.

Consisting of 9 tracks the DVD includes extensive unseen footage of the event in addition to a 95-page results file, which shows every competitor's performance at the championships.

***This is a unique DVD record of the championships which is a must for every fencer. If you were there re-live the events. If you were not there, see what you missed. 50% of the profits of the DVD will be donated to the National Veterans Association.
Order now!***

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Re-branding of the NVA

Re-branding of our organisation is not just about a change of our name. What is envisaged by the re-branding exercise is to build upon the success of the last few years, especially the 2006 World Championships in Bath and the kudos engendered, to improve the experience of belonging to our organisation and to be able to present a dynamic image not only within but also to the outside the fencing world.

We should carefully evaluate what our organisation is for, what we are doing to meet the membership's expectations and how we can increase membership so that we can keep more fencers in active sport. If we had a larger membership our standing in the fencing community, at home and abroad, would be enhanced and bigger and better opportunities, including for example, inexpensive overseas trips for fencers at all standards and international championships based in the UK, could well arise as a result.

The name change is a small but very important part of the exercise. The name, logo, letterheads etc of an organisation are the handshake of that organisation and their presentation is the first step to establish a relationship with potential partners.

I believe that our membership should be much higher than it is. There are barriers to increasing membership from existing fencers over 40 years old in the UK. Some of them are deterred from joining because of, among other reasons,

- the negative attitude towards the veterans movement in the past
- their unwillingness to be called or to see themselves as Veterans
- a lack of understanding of who we are and what we do

If we are able to lift the image of our organisation, so that our aims are better understood, recruitment by word of mouth recommendations will almost certainly increase.

A new image would be used to ensure that our aims are better understood both within and outside of the fencing community.

Notwithstanding what some members have said, it is a fact that when I approached companies for sponsorship, or for advertising revenue, the name National Veterans Association produced a silence if not a blank stare. An explanation of the name, involving the laborious "National Veterans Association of British Fencing", failed to impress.

The word "veterans" was not one with which marketing managers were keen to be associated. It definitely does

not convey the message of British fencers competing at national and international level on equal terms with other fencers including former Olympians, World, European and National champions from around the world. This not only applies to potential sponsors but also to the media, the general public and even, as mentioned above, fencers in the UK.

The lesson to be learned was that our image and presentation was not good enough, especially in difficult trading conditions, for us to be in a position to attract significant sponsorship, and therefore give ourselves the opportunity to take on large scale projects on a more regular basis. We need to present an image which is more attractive to marketing managers and other potential partners. We must have a better presentation of who we are, what our aims are and what we can offer to the sponsor in return for cash or other support. The more members we have, the more contacts a sponsor has, and the higher our value is to him. Although I can not guarantee that a new image would result in an influx of sponsorship revenue, an improvement in the quality of our image and communication media will certainly strengthen our case.

Our aims might possibly be achievable without a change of name and visual image; but I believe that we will give ourselves a much better chance of success and project a better image to the outside world with a new, more appropriate and dynamic name, a more up to date and attractive logo, letter heads, website, Newsletter etc.

David Sweeney

January 2007

MAY 17-20
European Veterans Individual
Championships, St Gallen,
Switzerland

NO SELECTION REQUIRED,
OPEN.
ALL FENCERS WELCOME
AND ENCOURAGED TO
ATTEND....
Details in the next newsletter

Letters to the Editor - TIME FOR CHANGE?

Linda,

I have always been an advocate of "Masters" replacing "Veterans" . It gives the impression of knowledge and skill which we older fencers rely on to offset our lack of youth!

I believe that it also will enable the organisation to obtain valuable sponsorship more easily and should help to raise the profile of our art and may even attract some media interest, all good for the sport as a whole.

I think we should first agree that Masters replaces Veterans and then decide how it should be incorporated. My preferred name would be British Masters Fencing Federation.

Peter Harvey

Dave,

The matter of a name change came up some years ago from Richard Bonehill and Frank Mills. As I informed Richard then, and it still applies now, the name "Masters" has a particular significance in the FIE which is totally inappropriate and presumptuous for the NVA to hijack and go in contradiction to the FIE. The FIE has been running off and on for 15 years or more Masters competitions which are for the top 8 or so elite fencers in the world senior rankings with, for fencing, usually substantial monetary prizes. There is currently a mention of one on the FIE website held at Levallois in France.

I agree that there is a World Masters Games in which fencing sporadically appears but nobody worldwide knows what these are. One has to explain that they are a sort of "Olympics" for older

people; so the name Masters has no general meaning to identify veterans. There are plenty of other sports in the UK which have veterans as a name and activity in their organisation.

Additionally, the FIE, who were originally against veterans fencing, actually call it veterans in French so who are we to differ.

Surely if a name change is desperately needed the name British Veterans Fencing would suffice, particularly as the home countries now have their own organisations. And there is absolutely no need for a change in logo or "rebranding". Logos do very little to change images and we are who we are. We are not a new brand. They are just misguided marketing peoples' ploys. Has the BFA gained anything from its latest logo? The NVA logo is totally adequate. The letters NVA on it could easily be changed to BVF.

Regards

Robin Davenport

Hi Dave

A couple of comments arising from the newsletter:

Firstly, with respect to the new name for the vets;

I am not sure that we should be using Master in the new name for the vets. The term Master is often associated with elitism, rank and superiority.

For example: Master race; Master of Arts; Head Master; 'Lord and Master'; Master class; to name a few.

Fencing has always had this elitist link, with the majority of fencers coming from public school backgrounds and which discourages the input of fencers from more ordinary backgrounds. I see this regularly in my club, Cambridgeshire Fencing Club. We get a lot of adults coming to beginner's courses saying that they always wanted to try fencing, but never had a chance. The only schools that promote fencing in our area are the local public / independent schools.

Using Master in the title will make the vets appear elitist and will discourage fencers from wanting to join.

Secondly, with respect to the Vets National Championships;

Again, the championships have been split so that Sabre is on the Friday. I know that the sabreurs form the smallest group, but why should we always have to take a days holiday, to be able to compete. In fact last year, I couldn't attend the Championships, as work commitments made it impossible for me to take holiday on that day. I'm sure a number of other fencers feel the same. Wouldn't it be fairer to rotate the days, so every weapon has to suffer fencing on a Friday. Alternatively might it not be better to spread out the days over a number of weekends. This might make it easier for those travelling over long distances to be able to travel down Friday night, fence on the Saturday and travel back leisurely on the Sunday.

Apart from that, keep up the good work and have a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

Laurence Bunnage

Question :What's in a name ?

Answer; A hell of a lot!

Having been involved in the organisation of The Great Britain v Germany match in Cornwall in 2005 and The World Championships in Bath 2006 I know how difficult it is to attract sponsorship or interest in an organisation entitled The National Veterans Association . It is imperative that an organisation of our size and reputation has a suitable title. It is time for a change of image and I believe the proposed new name of British Masters Fencing is an excellent suggestion bringing us into line with other sporting organisations such as Tennis , Golf and Surfing who have masters tournaments and championships .

I know that a number of 'Vets' do have a problem with the word 'Masters' as it has previously been used in a fencing context . However I believe that once the change of name has been publicised there will be very little confusion. I am sure the suggestion will lead to a lively and interesting debate but I wish to give my whole hearted support to Frank Mills and personally would be proud to be known as a member of British Masters Fencing.

Lets go mad and have a stunning new logo as well!

Richard Bonehill

Letter to the Editor re Change of Name

I am not opposed on principle to a change of name for the NVA but I would like to hear arguments for a change that are more convincing.

The arguments put forward are based on future fund-raising and the adequacy of description in the present name.

In the case of fund raising, I would like to hear evidence that a change of name would produce a flow of funds. It has been suggested that a

limiting factor in raising sponsorship for the 2006 World Championships was having "Veterans" as part of our name. But there are many possible reasons for not getting funds. It is possible that minority sports are not seen as a sound investment. It is possible that money is short in the companies approached. British Fencing, with a more direct name, does not fare any better at fund raising: they have only one commercial sponsor, Leon Paul, which also supports the NVA.

To get any money we have to work very hard at promoting what we do, who we are and what we believe in. I believe that the name is only a tiny part of that promotion.

We should be looking at ways to improve how we present ourselves. For example, the website is looking dated and I am working on that. When the new designs are approved then the effects will filter down to the letterheads and the newsletter.

I believe that the NVA is an established brand in the fencing world. The association is 20 years old this year. And we have been successful for longer than just the last 5 years as implied in *Time For Change*. We collected medals in 1997, 1998, and 1999 at European championships (as far as my computer records go back). We collected medals at the 1999 World Championships. We should remember, and take pride in, that what we are doing today is building on the achievements of others who have gone before us.

There is a risk in changing an established brand and my opinion is that "if it ain't broke, don't fix it".

John Mason

Dear Dave,

If the National Veterans Association does not correctly indicate what we are then neither does British Masters Fencing.

I am British and a Fencer, but I am Master of nothing. A better change of name would be National Veteran Fencers Association or if you really need the nationality, British Veteran Fencers Association.

I feel that the term Masters may apply to those who were elite Fencers in their youth but it certainly does not reflect folk like me nor fencers who took up the sport late in life and will never truly "master" the sport. Our Association is for these people just as much as it is for our ex Olympians, so let our label say exactly what we are - British Fencers of all standards who are grouped together simply because we are Veterans.

Furthermore the term Veterans does not seem to have harmed Runners, Cyclists, Squash Players, Rowers, Rugby Players and a host of others who still use it to describe their older participants.

Yours faithfully

Malc Cawton

Dave

It took me 12 long years to join the vets as I didn't want to be regarded as a Veteran. I didn't understand quite what the Vets were about. I feel we should change the name and re-launch the organisation so we can go on to bigger and better things.

Clearly there is still a place for the type of organisation the older members hanker after. But we may, in my opinion, not be picking up younger fencers, 40+ because we are called Vets.

If we get a larger membership we can organise the type of fencing that Dave advocates.

We need the larger fencing community to see us for what we have now evolved into.

Linda Lawes

Reply to Laurence Bunnage

Concerning the issue of Sabre on Friday afternoons at the Veterans National Championships each year;

The purpose of having the weapons on 3 separate days is to allow all interested the opportunity to compete at all three weapons and the chance to qualify for European and World championships at more than one weapon and to compete for the Master at Arms Trophies.

Your committee have on several occasions considered this problem. They have indeed discussed having each weapon on a different weekend (or at least two). The objections are as follows,

1. Those wishing to compete at all three weapons would have considerable extra travel/accommodation costs.
2. There is little or no availability of dates within the calendar which would allow for separate weapon competitions to be run and which would give adequate time for selection, for World and particularly European championships, to take place.
3. There would be considerable extra costs incurred by the extra venue hire which would have implications on the level of entry fees at each weapon.
4. Sabre is, at the present time, the lowest entry and can be accommodated in half a day. The other weapons could not be run in half a day.

I know that our current national championship programme is not an ideal solution but, for the reasons above, it is best we can do, inconveniencing the minimum number of members.

David Sweeney
Chairman

Make a Name for yourself (and us)!!

Do you have any suggestions for a new name for our organisation? If you have and you would like them to be considered at the AGM please send it to Dave Sweeney by email or to the address below.

If you would like your submission to be anonymous it will be treated as such. Any submissions considered flippant by the Chairman, after consultation with the author, will not be put to the AGM.

If you have an idea for a new logo please send it in to Dave Sweeney, (preferably electronically as a jpeg), so that it can be submitted to the AGM for consideration.

Send your suggestions by email to mrdsweeney@hotmail.com or by post to D. Sweeney at

Hop Mill Cottage, Painswick Road, Salmon Springs, Stroud, Glos, GL6 6LE.

In support of Masters Fencing.

Dave Sweeney

Several people have expressed doubts about the use of the term 'Masters' should a change of the name of our organisation be proposed. I have set out below some information regarding the term which may be of help in the debate.

Firstly, during 2006, the FIE, via the European Fencing Confederation (CFE/CEE) joined the European Masters Sports Association EMSA and has registered Fencing as one of the sports to take part in the Games to be held in Malmo, Sweden in 2008. The age categories the CFE has stipulated for fencing are exactly those used by Great Britain and the European Veterans Fencing Committee (EVFC).

The World Masters Games have been held on a four yearly cycle since 1985 and fencing has been involved from time to time. Several of our members have taken part in these Games and we had a particularly large delegation in the 1989 Games held in Aarhus, Denmark where we competed against fencers from Australia and other European nations.

It might be useful to look at the definition of 'Master' as given by EMSA in their website www.emg2008.com,

“The term ‘master’ is an age designation and does not denote a level of sports proficiency or a particular sports achievement. The European Masters Games, which will take place every four years, are open to everyone. Participants compete as individuals and not in National teams. There are no qualification or selection criteria to compete in the European Masters Games. The only entry requirement is that competitors satisfy the minimum age for competition specified in the technical rules of the respective international sports federations.”

Furthermore the definition of a master according to the International Masters Games Association, see their website www.imga-masters.com, is as follows,

What is a "Master" ?

Expressions such as "senior" or "veteran" are frequently applied to mature athletes. In the context of World Masters Games, the term "Master" is applied to male and female competitors who comply with the International Sports Federations' rules regarding the minimum age in their respective sport. Most Masters' sports are arranged in age categories which increase by five or ten year intervals.

As a guideline, the minimum age is 30 years. However, this depends on each sport's international rulings and a decision by the host city organising committee and the IMGGA Board of Governors.

Although no prior qualification is required in order to participate, many masters are extremely competent and competitive. Several are former World Champions or Olympians, others have had talents and motivation to make it to the top, but for various reasons they never had the opportunity. Some compete solely to defy their age or to add a competitive element to the desire of staying in good shape.

All competitions are run by the respective international sports federation, in accordance with the technical specifications of the different federations.

Both definitions describe very well fencers in our organization and the EVFC.

The European Masters Games central philosophy is 'sport for life', promoting a long term approach towards sport and physical activity and acknowledging that competitive sport can continue throughout life. **Doesn't this precisely sum up our own central aim?**



NOTABLE RESULTS

(Top half or last 32)

NORTH WEST OPEN

WE (6)

1 Fiona Haldane

WELSH OPEN

WF (60)

26 Jo Bowyer

30 Dawn Townsend

32 Gillian Worman

ME (189)

15 Howard West

WE (123)

30 Kate Smith

WS (53)

16 Jane Hutchison

22 Jenny Morris

32 Vicky Garrity

WEST LANCASHIRE 1-HIT EPEE(32)

J 4 David Stobbs

J11 Mavis Thornton (highest placed woman)

J11 Rick Kent

J14 Linda Kent

MILLER-HALLET MEN'S EPEE(154)

24 Neal Mallett

29 Anton Pollard

30 Ian Worthington

32 Malcolm Allton

HEREFORD & WORCESTER

MF (97)

7 Lindsay Watkiss

9 Nick Stokes

20 Tony Conyard

WF (41)

13 Dawn Townsend

18 Astrid Merrick

ME (151)

6 Anton Pollard

MS (56)

J6 Richard Cohen

14 Steve Potter

26 Chris Prevett



CAPTION COMPETITION

"Fencing goddess practises offering her hand to her defeated opponent."

"Aftermath of a Russian handshake."

"You will jolly well stay in that cupboard until you promise to put the accents in 'Epee'."

"I tried the trumpets, let's try a good push."

"If someone would just move this wall, I could get my hand straight."

"Guess which one is the immovable object?"

"Hilary had a real bent for warming up exercises"

"NO - my wrist IS straight, but the pillar moved in to 'corps a corps'."

Editor's favourite

"Will somebody else come and hold this wall up; I need to go to the loo!"

New Trial Format for National Championships.

There has been a number of requests for a review of format of our National Championships. The main concern has been that at weapons where there is a large entry, losing even one fight in the seeding rounds means that the fencer is almost certainly not going to make the top final pool. To be fair to all, this depends upon perfect seeding, which is not possible. A person of unknown form but very good could potentially eliminate the rightful runner-up from the top final pool.

The Committee has considered the problem and has produced a new format for trial at the 2007 National Championships in March. The new format is as follows;

Where a weapon entry is 19 or less the championship will be decided by poule unique.

Where a weapon entry is 20 or more the seeding and format of the first two rounds is as per the current situation. After the second round fencers 13 and below will be assigned to pools of six in seed order 13-18, 19-24 and so on. Barrages will be used as to determine who is promoted from fencers with equal indicators at the boundaries between pools.

The top twelve seeds based on the combined seeding of the first two rounds, are placed in two semi-finals according to the normal format for a competition in pools. The top three from each semi-final will be promoted to a final of six (if two or more fencers have equal indicators barrage/s will take place decide who is promoted). The current rules regarding barrages for the winner and second and third place will apply. The bottom three from each semi-final will fence in a second pool for places 7-12.

As mentioned above, this format will be treated as experimental for this year. A review of the new systems suitability will be carried out after the event by the committee. All feedback will be welcome.

Full details are available on the website, or send your sae to Hilary Arnold.

Eligibility

Following an enquiry last year the rules on eligibility for the National Championships have been changed to limit the entry to paid up members of the NVA who are eligible to hold a British passport.

Henry and the RAF

Henry shows the way: After teaching in Finland late last year, Henry found himself fencing once again for the Royal Navy team in an RAF event. The teams were Royal Navy Past, Royal Navy Present, Royal Navy Reserves and a team from London. Fencing to 45 Henry anchored the team to win all their matches! He won 7 out of 9 fights and although out-scored in two of his fights hung on for the team to win! Henry was the oldest competitor.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2007

<p>JANUARY 27- 28 Quadrangular In Wrexham <i>Teams selected by Home Country selectors</i></p>
<p>MARCH 9-11 AGM and NVA <i>Championships</i> <i>GLI Leisure Centre Gloucester</i> <i>Friday: Sabre Saturday: Foil Sunday: Epée</i> ENTRY FORM WITH THIS NEWSLETTER</p>
<p>APRIL 28-29 NVA Age Group Qualifiers <i>Stantonbury Campus, Milton Keynes</i> <i>Note date change!</i></p>
<p>MAY 17-20 European Veterans Individual <i>Championships, St Gallen, Switzerland</i> NO SELECTION REQUIRED, OPEN. ALL FENCERS WELCOME AND ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND.... <i>Details in a later newsletter</i></p>
<p>JUNE 2-3 BATH Unisex Sabre (2nd) and BATH Unisex Foil (3rd) <i>Note date change!</i></p>

<p>JUNE 15-17 GBR vs Germany, Berlin, Germany <i>Selection based on NVA Selection Rules</i></p>
<p>JUNE 24 Dunstan Epée and Foil, Glastonbury OPEN</p>
<p>JULY 13 - 15 Commonwealth Veterans Championships, Toronto, Canada Individual OPEN. <i>Team selected by Home Countries.</i> <i>Note date change!</i> <i>Details in a later newsletter</i></p>
<p>SEPTEMBER 14 – 16 NOTE DATE CHANGE World Championships, Sydney, Australia Selection based on NVA Selection Rules Details in a later newsletter</p>
<p>SEPTEMBER 30 SUNDAY Middlesex Veterans Unisex Epée Individual OPEN</p>
<p>OCTOBER 7 SUNDAY Veterans Team Challenge, Loughborough NO selection required, OPEN. Teams put together on the day.</p>

Merseyside Open: Medals for best Veteran

The tournament will take place over the weekend of 10/11 February 2007 at Liverpool College and there will be a medal for the best Veteran at each weapon, open to NVA members (or equivalent) only. The entry form is available on the tournament website at www.moft.co.uk, from where online entries can also be made.

Hampshire Open: Medals for best Veteran

The tournament will take place on 17th February 2007 and there will be a medal for the best Veteran at each weapon, open to NVA members (or equivalent) only. Entries to Carl Morris, 45 Western Road, Chandlers Ford, Hampshire, SO53 5 DD, phone 0238 027 1206.