



# British Veterans Fencing

## Fencing RESULTS Style !

NEWS September 2008

SOUTH WEST

win the first

Veterans WINTON Cup

### Individual Winners

Men's Foil-Pierre Harper LON

Women's Foil- Linda Strachan LON

Men's Epee- John Hyde SE

Women's Epee-Sara Spence SE

Men's Sabre- Rob Penton Mid

Women's Sabre-Lynne Bornemisza SW

FULL RESULTS AND PICTURES  
IN THE NEXT NEWSLETTER

# Dates for your Diary 2008

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## Veterans Unisex Epée

September 28th

Middlesex

Venue as usual

## STILL TIME TO ENTER THE UNISEX EPEE

## World Championships Limoges France

October 2nd to 5th

Team selected

## CHRISTMAS FENCING and 21st

Celebrate the 21st Birthday of the NVA

29th November

## Menu for the Christmas Dinner out in the next issue **BOOK THE DATE**

## Veterans Quadrangular Match 2009

To be held in Belfast

First announcement

25th/26th April  
2009

# Veterans from the past! A different twist

At least 3 Veterans here in this one, but who are they? And Where??



Hi Linda

Don't know where the NI Team photo was taken... but can identify all but one - and there are 3 NVA members (Pat, Gillian and Richard), but also one (Peter Cripwell) who is now fencing with the Dublin vets.

Bill Cumming, Chris Kelly, Brian Robinson (Gillian's brother), Peter Cripwell, Andy Chambers, ?, Richard Cohen Fiona Hendren, Pat Casey, Gillian Worman, Lizzie Ashe

I imagine Gillian can fill in the rest...or did she supply the photo?  
Fiona Haldane

Thanks Fiona \_ Gillian did indeed supply the photo! Over to you Gill—where was it?

## NOTABLE VETS OF THE PAST

### 2. British team of 1906

As the country basks in the reflected glory of the achievements of Team GB in Beijing, it is worth remembering that the first British fencing team to take part in an Olympic Games – the Intermediate Olympics of 1906 in Athens – was almost entirely made up of veterans. In this 6-nation epee tournament Britain won the silver medal and missed gold only because of outrageously bad presiding – nothing new there, then!

These Intermediate Olympics were intended to be the first of a second series of Games to be held permanently in Athens halfway through the 4-year cycle of the modern Olympiad. But, because of the expense, they were held only once. They were recognised by the IOC as official Olympics until 1949, when they were removed from the list. But as far as British fencing is concerned, they were a major success.

Competitive epee fencing had only been practised in England since 1900, when Charles Newton-Robinson founded the Epee Club, but many foilists had taken to it with great enthusiasm. The six-man team that went to Athens included two lords and one knight and the four who actually fenced in the final had an average age of 46. The team first defeated Germany and then Belgium before meeting France in the final. It was one-hit epee and after judging against Britain described as “nothing short of scandalous”, the match ended in a draw, 8-all. Instead of selecting one man from each team for a final bout, they re-fought the entire match and France won 9-6.

So who were these men? Well, there was Charles Newton-Robinson, 52, who had introduced epee fencing to England after studying it in Paris in the 1890s. He was a barrister, poet and expert on Old Master drawings and engraved gems.

Lord Desborough, 50, was considered by many to have been the best all-round sportsman in the world. As Willy Grenfell at Harrow, he had not only been the best fencer, but also won cricket prizes and set a time for running the mile that stood as a school record for over 60 years. He went to Oxford and for two years in succession was in the winning boat race team. He won the Thames punting championship 4 years in succession, climbed the Matterhorn three times by different routes, twice swam across Niagara pool starting as near the Falls as possible, the second time in a snowstorm, killed four stags with four shots... the list is endless. He was also a first class administrator, becoming President of the AFA, the MCC, the Lawn Tennis Association, the Amateur Athletic Association, the Amateur Wrestling Association, the Royal Life Saving Society and the British Olympic Association among others. At one stage he was serving on 115 committees simultaneously, but declined the Governor-Generalship of Canada as it would have required more than half an hour of his time a week.

Then there was Sir Cosmo Duff Gordon, 43, who fought brilliantly against France, winning all four fights. Alas, although he performed heroically in Athens, fate decreed that it was to be rumours of more reprehensible behaviour for which he would be remembered. Six years later he had the misfortune to board the Titanic. When it began to sink, he and his wife and her secretary found themselves in a lifeboat with two American passengers and seven stokers. It rowed away with only 12 people on board when it could have held 40. As the natural leader of the group, he was accused of failing to rescue any of the drowning and freezing passengers. The stokers had their pay stopped as soon as they left the stricken liner and in compensation Duff Gordon paid each of them £5, which the press claimed was a reward for letting his small party on their boat. A recently discovered letter from Lady Duff Gordon's secretary explains how they happened to be the only passengers around when that particular lifeboat was lowered and pulled away in pitch darkness. But the dirt stuck, the name of Duff Gordon was blackened in smart society and he lived like a recluse until his death in 1931.

The fourth team member was Edgar Seligman, a mere youngster at 39, who was British foil and epee champion at the time. A remarkable all-round fencer, he still holds several records: the only British fencer to win three Olympic medals – team silver at three successive Games; the first man to become champion at all three weapons and the only man to win them all twice; the oldest champion, winning the sabre title at the age of 56 in 1924; and the oldest Briton to reach an Olympic final, which he also did in 1924 – this time at foil.

The youngest member of the team to fence in Athens, although not in the final, was Lord Howard de Walden. He provided the transport to Greece. This consisted of his private yacht, the *Branwen*, a steam-powered schooner, all teak and polished brass, which was taken to Naples where the team joined it. They arrived a week after a major eruption of Vesuvius, which left the town a foot deep in volcanic ash. It was because of that eruption that London first staged the Olympics in 1908. They had been due to take place in Rome, but the Italian government felt it had to spend the money rebuilding Naples instead and so, with 2 years' notice, the Games moved to London.

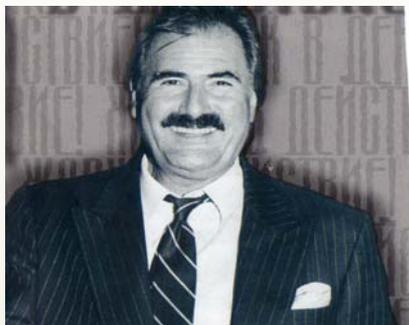
The non-fencing captain was Theodore Cook, writer and editor of *The Field*, who wrote a book about their adventures entitled appropriately *The Cruise of the Branwen*. He was also team captain and chief organiser of the fencing events at the 1908 Olympics and was responsible for dropping foil from the programme as an unsuitable weapon for competition, saying, "It is the instrument of perhaps the most graceful and courteous form of athletic exercise in the world and its whole spirit is destroyed by mere combativeness". Ah, those were the days!

Watching the team's performance in Athens was Edward VII, himself a keen fencer and, as Prince of Wales, a member of the London Fencing Club. He is said to have won a substantial bet with the king of Greece that Britain would beat Germany. After the Games the king agreed to become patron of the AFA, a tradition continued by each successive monarch ever since.

Malcolm Fare

## A FRIENDSHIP REFORGED

To many Veterans the name George Ganchev is still well known and Dennis and I recently had the pleasure of an invitation from George to stay with him and his partner – Shushi – in Sofia of which more to come.



For those who do not know George Ganchev, he is Bulgarian and an ex-World Sabre Champion and was invited by Charles de Beaumont to come to Britain as the National and Olympic coach. He also established his own very successful club in London – Salle Ganchev – and coached at the London Fencing Club.

After several years he then went to Hollywood where he not only established a reputation for coaching many well-known stars but also became a Director and Producer which he still continues today. He is also a skilled guitarist and was a member of a group. He is an author, writer and poet as well as a television personality, particularly in Bulgaria and Los Angeles, where he lives for several months of the year. A very charismatic and larger-than-life character!

He then returned to Bulgaria to establish a political party after the bloodless revolution against Russia and was heavily involved in politics for many years.

He still regards England as his 'fencing home' and has many happy memories of his time here as well as retaining friends he made at the time.

So there we are alighting from the plane at Sofia but there is no missing George, standing head and shoulders above everyone else at 6'6" waving to us. The biggest problem is getting to the car as everyone comes up to him wanting to shake his hand and speak to him. We stop at traffic lights and the man in the car next to us jumps out and heads for us – what now? No problem, he just wants to shake George by the hand and have a chat – in the middle of a 3-lane highway in Sofia! A quick cultural tour of Sofia and we are on our way out to the mountains which surround Sofia where we arrive at his main house perched very near the top fully equipped with a large swimming pool, gym and a beautiful chapel. A stillness and quiet immediately surround you – apart from the barking guard dogs that seem to be at every house – and the views are just incredible. A wonderful greeting from his lovely partner Shushi.

The next day we were in Sofia to see some of the sights, particularly the Russian Nevsky cathedral and a very interesting street market and then on to the top coffee house – every city seems to have one – and meeting some of their friends in between excellent coffee and fabulous pastries! One interesting point we find we are travelling in a bullet-proof/bomb-proof car left over from his days in politics – does it inspire security or fear? At every police checkpoint, he is acknowledged so perhaps security wins!

We also are able to spend time at the History Museum, a most marvelous building specially built to house only the history of Bulgaria which I have to say is quite fascinating and contains many beautiful artifacts.

Finally it is time to leave after many late-night catch-ups and much laughter but hopefully, now the link is re-forged it will continue.

George wishes to be remembered all to those who knew him.

Marcia Stretch

### **More Vets from the 1970'S - Anyone know 3 vets in here?**



### **LOST SABRE LOST SABRE LOST SABRE**

I have just realised that I am missing a sabre since the Celtic Challenge. Any chance you could find out if anyone has come across it? Its an Allstar left handed, red inside guard.  
Rgds,

Rose Gregory.



# Notables



**Andrew Ramsay 5th in the Isle of Wight Open—left out in error –sorry.**

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**Steve Potter 20th out of 128 at the Hamlet Open Sabre !!**

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## Norfolk Open - 22/7/2008

MF (75)	13 Graham THORNTON 22 John HYDE 27 Anthony CONYARD 28 Paul ABRAHAMS 29 Jim HARRIS 33 Nick STOKES
ME (59)	10 Darryl HAZLEWOOD 22 Max TELFER 25 Bernard HARBOURN
MS (19)	3 Anthony SILVER 5 John NORRIE
WF (21)	3 Dawn TOWNSEND 8 Lynda NORRIE 10 Kate HARRIS
WE (24)	8 Mariette MASON 10 Sara SPENCE
WS (10)	5 Vivien FRITH

# SECOND RUN OF WINTON T-SHIRTS



## SIZES

XSmall 34/36

Small 36/38

Medium 38/40

Large 40/42

Xlarge 42/44

XXlarge 44/46

XXXlarge if available

I HAVE BEEN ASKED IF I CAN ORGANISE A SECOND RUN OF WINTON T SHIRTS.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO ORDER ONE PLEASE EMAIL ME ASAP AND I WILL ENQUIRE ABOUT MINIMUM QUANTITY AND PRICES.

I NEED NO MONEY AS YET.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

SIZE \_\_\_\_\_

QUANTITY \_\_\_\_\_

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PLEASE RING/EMAIL BY **25TH SEPTEMBER**

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