



# BRITISH VETERANS FENCING

## NEWS LETTER

Date: August 2022

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### WORDS FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Hi all

Welcome to our August Newsletter of the year. Thanks again to all the contributors and especially Nicola who tirelessly puts this together for us.

Some really interesting articles here including our recent exploits in Hamburg, results of the Home International event in Bristol, dietary and protein advice for older fencers and, of course, what I personally look forward to reading, the introductions of our newest members.

You will also read an article regarding why the 15th of September this year is an important date in the story of the late great Bob Anderson. Some of you, including our BF President Hilary Philbin, have been personally coached by Bob and others will have attended several of the many excellent training courses that he used to run across the country, often accompanied by his eventual successor Ken Pearson.

But talking of important dates I ran into our founder and Life President of the veteran movement Henry De Silva at the recent Commonwealth Fencing Championships in London. Henry informed me that he founded the vets a quarter of a century ago this Autumn. I think his trips started before then (I was probably still in school! – I wish) but if that is the start of our organisation, it's certainly worth a mention.

I won't write much more as the following articles are meaty enough, but I certainly want to mention the success of England running the Commonwealth Fencing Championships over the past two weeks. Congratulations to all the participants, medal winners and those that came to support. What an excellent idea to have the Juniors, Seniors, Vets, Cadets and Wheelchair fencers all participating together. Absolutely inclusive. And what a triumph of organisation on the part of Alex Savin and all his helpers (I can't possible list all the names) to pull it off. I heard some amazingly complimentary comments from our friends from abroad. On behalf of BVF I have thanked Alex and asked him to pass thanks on to all involved.

Carl Morris, President BVF

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## NEWS FROM OUR FOUR NATIONS

### **New Blood for Scottish Veterans - Sheila Anderson**

#### **Home Nations**

The Scottish team for the Home Nations was notable this year as nine of the 22 selected were fencing in their first home nations event for Scotland. This also meant some teams had the luxury of four members.

With Hugh Kernohan confined through Covid the men's epee team were all debutants - Andrew Brown, Niall Campbell and Malcolm Downie. Their highlight was storming back in their last three fights against Wales from 22-30 down to lose 43-44 in overtime. A rousing match to watch and a spur for the future.

The other newcomers were Ruth Davidson, Richard Foster, Rory Gibson, Roz Graham, Lindsay Rodgers and Yvonne Walls. We hope this is a sign of more veterans swelling our ranks, with greater competition for team places.

It was an enjoyable weekend and great to get together as a team, as shown above. Also, good practice for the Commonwealths telling us where work was required.

### **Commonwealth preparation**

No sooner had the Home Nations finished than the work started for the Commonwealth Championships, individually and as part of the Scottish Team preparation. We had several online seminars, and three training weekends, for all squads, as a team and in weapon groups. Conditioning and preparation were considered, tactics discussed, leaving us all mentally strong and ready for the fray.

Being part of a full team we hope will spur the development of veterans fencing in Scotland.



### **England Veterans - John Crouch**

At last we are back to competitive fencing. England ran a successful Home International in Bristol in April and retained the Justin Smith trophy. Thanks to everyone, especially Bristol Blades, for making it a most enjoyable and competitive day.

We now look forward to the Commonwealth Championships starting in August in London.

We will be holding our AGM on the Saturday evening at the Winton Cup in September. It is time for a change of leadership. I have been Chairman since we formed England Veterans Fencing some 15 years ago. We now have an established committee and responsibility for two major events; the annual Home International which we host every 4 years, and the bi-annual Veterans Commonwealth Championships for which we select teams. The agenda and details will be circulated in the next couple of weeks. Please come along and support the committee.

### **Northern Ireland - Fiona Haldane**

Celebrating the winning Women's Foil team at the Four Nations. They had only met that morning - and pulled off the biggest surprise of the event - huge kudos to the captain, Gill Worman!



## WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

**BVF would like to take this opportunity to welcome new members who have recently joined or in some cases re-joined. Some have kindly taken the time to introduce themselves. Look out for them at competitions and don't forget to say hello. We hope this information will also help team captains select for the Winton Cup.**

# WELCOME

### **Leslie MacDonald – Bath Sword Club**

**Adrian Collins – Newham Swords.** 'I'm 58 and started fencing in 1975 at Salle Goodall and was forced to retire from fencing in 1987 after a serious car accident. During my time in fencing, I represented Great Britain in the u/20 and at senior level. After a 35 year break, I'm back to join the British Vets and continue where I left off. See you all at the Commonwealth Championships.'

### **Chaz Parvez** Worthing

**Marc Burkhalter – Derby Epee Academy** 'I have been fencing for 30 years and have competed on the circuit for approximately 25 of those. I have represented GB and Wales at Epee at cadet, junior and senior level and I hope to continue to do so now that I have joined the veteran ranks. I am based in Leicester and train at DEA.'

**Nichol Queste-Herelle - Salle Paul** 'A keen fencer (some may say more enthusiasm than technical skill 😊).. I'm keen to enter the competition areas and will be taking part in the Commonwealth Fencing Championships this year, so I look forward to seeing and say Hi to my fellow BVF comrades there... a member of Salle Paul.'

**Trevor Beynon - Fernwood Sword** 'looking forward to being part of the Veteran fencing community and taking part in training events and competitions (after a bit more practice). It's never too late to start. I have been fencing with Fernwood Sword Club for about 14 weeks and have



thoroughly enjoyed every session. I have even competed at my first (non-veteran) competition and won an =3rd.'

**Marvin Evans** 'My daughter's boyfriend was interested in taking up fencing so having not fenced since 1994 I started looking online in the Bristol/Bath area for a suitable club. That's when I came across Bristol Blades who started in 2015. To my surprise, as well as a Bristol club, they had a North Bristol club which happens to be half a mile from where I live. I had no excuse not to go along one night as they said I could borrow some kit. That was several months ago and I'm really enjoying it, so I'm looking forward to catching up with fencing friends from back in the day!'

**David Phillips - Sydney University**

**Richard Hall - Guildford**

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## NEWS FROM EVF PRESIDENT CARYL OLIVER



**It has been a busy couple of months for EVF with the European Team Championships in Hamburg in May, the presentation of the 2022 Fencer of the Year Medals and the inaugural World Fencing Criterium in Paris in July!**

While I am at these events as President of EVF, and therefore looking out for all 30 member countries, I am naturally interested and supportive of my GBR team mates!

### **European Team Championships – Hamburg:**

The event was staged in an ice hockey stadium (fortunately without the ice) and a strong star wars theme was part of the opening entertainment. We were also treated to some disgustingly agile young athletes who bent and folded their bodies in ways that we veterans could not even think about doing without damage!

With all the pistes in one area, excellent lighting and live streaming of finals this event raised the bar again for the European Championships. There were also some innovations in weapon control that seemed to make the process run more smoothly.

Two issues of concern have now been made deal breakers for any future hosts: Free Wi-Fi and free water!

This was the first European Championships that we have been able to hold since 2019 so there was a great deal of catching up with old friends and, despite the disruption, a distinct lift in the standard of the fencing.

I will not make any detailed comments about performances but I will quote the words I heard the most from GB fencers “we need to be fencing the other Europeans much more if we want to be able to beat them”.

This is the objective the EVF Circuit events – which brings me neatly to the next topic...

### **Fencer of the Year Medals:**

We introduced the EVF Circuit in 2019-20 and had enough events to award the 2020 Fencer of the Year Medals but because of Covid we did not have a European Championships at which to present them – so they were posted out to recipients. There was no medal of the year for 2021 but we were pleased to have the 2022 Fencer of the Year Medals being physically presented for the first time at Hamburg.

I was interested to see, on the first day, that the winners were relatively subdued on the podium. By day two, however, something had obviously registered because suddenly the recipients were celebrating their success and posing for photos!

The significance of the Circuit and the outcome in terms of public acclaim has given European Veterans the respect they deserve for consistent performance.

I would like to acknowledge Leonardo Patti from Italy who quietly manages the Circuit events and our own John Mason who is the absolute King of the ratings system!

### **Paris Criterium:**

This event was first proposed to EVF a long time ago as a means of offering an individual event to Veteran Fencers in the years of the Team Championships. What has emerged is more than we envisaged!

Held for the first time this July, this is the only global event that is open to any veteran fencer in the World. (The World Championships are restricted to selected fencers).

This was a really well presented and organised event and those that participated had a very good competition in a great atmosphere of healthy competition! European fencers earned ranking points towards the 2023 Fencer of the Year but we saw participants from USA to Australia!

Sadly, Covid took its toll both before and after the event which suppressed the numbers as well as the invasion of Ukraine meaning that the normally large Russian contingent was not there.

GB scored 3 bronze medals and 1 silver. France topped the medal table, no surprise but there is no doubt that this event will attract an even bigger entry next time.

At this stage that will be in 2024 but the venue might change as this is the year of the Paris Olympics.

### **Wait, there's more....**

At the FIE Congress at the end of this year, it is hoped that there will be a positive vote to include 40+ fencers in the World Championships. If this is voted in the first World Championships at which this likely to happen will probably be 2025. The new format will mean a longer time for the Championships and the team event will change to the European structure of Veterans and Grand Veterans.

Good luck to all the Veterans who are fencing in the Commonwealth Championships – at least this is one event without those pesky Europeans!

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## **BVF MEDALS – IT'S TIME FOR A CHANGE, PAUL BAILLACHE**



We have been using the same medals for a number of years, and our stocks of pre-cast medals are now running low. We are now almost out of gold and silver medals, though we have a lot of bronze medals left to use up.

Our medal supplier is unable to make any new ones for us, so it's time for a change!

We want to continue to mark success with medals, but we now have an opportunity to consider newer types of medal made out of more interesting materials.

We would like BVF to be using something modern, colourful, and sustainable – like slate, wood or acrylic – and with a more flexible design so we can ring the changes every few years, or make the design adaptable for each event.



We will also review how we engrave medals. At an Age Group type event we present 96 differently engraved medals which is not easy for a supplier to support, and it would be better to spend more money on a better medal, as hopefully you all know what gender, age, and weapon you are!

The challenge is now on as we need to have new medals in time for the Guildford EVF event in January.

So I am making a plea for some help, or else you may have to rely on my limited artistic abilities! Those of you who organise competitions will be hearing from me.

- Have you designed medals before?
- Can you recommend any suppliers?
- Can you help design a new medal?

Please get in touch with me if you want to help.

We will have to use the remaining medal stock creatively over coming events, but they will continue to be engraved properly, as we cannot waste £500 of stock.

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## OUR TALENTED MEMBERS – MOIRA PUNT/EVE

To the fencing community, I am known as Moira Punt. In my previous business life and as an author, I am known to you as Moira Eve.



I first started fencing at the age of seventeen in an after work class activity with the Prudential Assurance Co. situated in Holborn Bars, London. I believe that the equipment was supplied by Leon Paul. My fencing tuition, somewhat limited, and hardly rememberable was short lived, as marriage followed combined with a transfer from New Business to Accounts in the Prudential's Essex branch where I resided at this time in my life. I tried some years later to return to fencing, only to find that at the age of forty-two....I was too

old! My busy business lifestyle and family left little time for sport.

With the thought I would never be able to fence again, when possible I did indulge in riding, cycling, judo and tennis. It appeared that at the end of the 90's onwards the government promoted sport for all ages. So, I returned to fencing when my late husband died in 2014. After a few months I was encouraged to enter my first county open competition and came second. I must confess that I had very little understanding of the right of way. I fenced then for Southend and Chelmsford clubs and subsequently joined the Veterans. In 2018 I moved to Somerset, and now fence at Bath Sword Club.

Many of you will already know my interest as a writer. It started from a very young age at school where I received scholarship and merit prizes for essays and stories, most of which were rewarded in the form of books. Later in my career as a freelance model, I was approached by Jean Barrett IPC magazines for an assignment in the Costa de la Luz for the whole family. During several interviews, she discovered I like to write and my husband was a keen photographer. As you can imagine, that sealed the deal for an all expenses three week trip to this undiscovered part of Spain. Not only was I paid for the assignment, but also for the article. My husband was also rewarded for his photography. In 1986, I formed a model and promotion agency in Essex where I managed for twenty years. During this time I wrote for a model magazine and freelance articles. I had always wanted to write a novel, but that takes time that I did not have, until I retired.

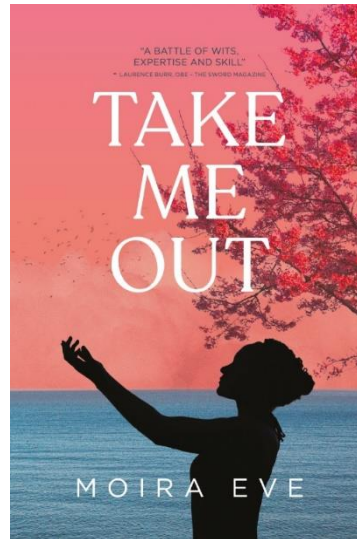
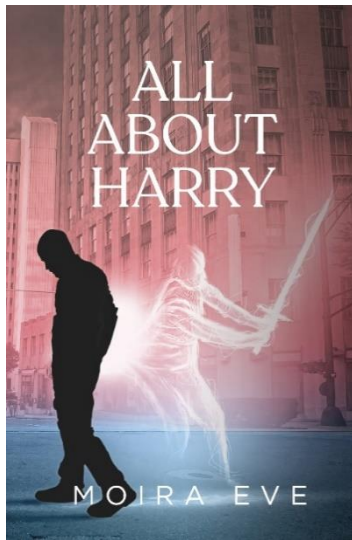
My late husband always encouraged me to hammer the keyboard and produce a novel, which I did so and finished in lockdown. 'Take Me Out' took five years to write and unfortunately my husband died before it was published. The sequel 'All About Harry' was published on 1st July, this year.

I love to write crime and mystery and hope that one day I will become a modern day version of the legend Agatha Christie. I have always been inspired by her twists and turns, the cliffhangers and the way she leaves you wanting more.

I can quite honestly say that I write more than I read, but I can remember my first visit to a library at the age of five, escorted by my eight year old brother. I found an oversized book entitled 'The Life and Loves of Young Nurse Carter.' My furious mother rushed me back to the library, and whilst she berated the embarrassed librarian, another assistant fetched me a replacement called 'Jack and Jill',

*'Much more suitable for a five year old,'* I was told. I would dearly love to know if anyone has read about Nurse Carter, it still intrigues me to this day.

I am now in my seventies, with a few medals and books in my repertoire, plus the privilege of fencing for GBR at the World's this year, but whether I am writing or fighting, I will always be looking for the next challenge.



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## AGE RELATED MUSCLE LOSS AND PROTEIN INTAKE, GRAHAM PAUL

It is well known that as we age we lose muscle mass, which is something that I have noticed only too well. This loss starts around 40-50 years of age, and by 80 is typically 50% of your muscle bulk when younger. This outcome is known as Sarcopenia.

Muscles are constantly being made from protein and broken down. When the rates are equal we maintain a constant muscle mass. It is thought that Sarcopenia is due to the body not converting as much of your protein intake into muscle as when younger (1). This reference describes research that shows as we age amino acid resistance manifests itself. The effect of this is that we require more protein intake alongside exercise to fully stimulate muscle protein synthesis.

Government recommendation is for a daily intake of protein of 0.75 grams per Kg of body weight. However this was a figure derived from work done some 40-50 years ago, and most nutritionists believe that a figure of 1.2 grams per Kg of body weight is more appropriate for most people. It is suggested that the protein requirement for athletes would be closer to 1.6 grams per Kg body weight (2). For the over 60s it seems that there is a requirement for an

even higher level of protein consumption (3), perhaps as much as 2 grams per Kg body weight.

Some research has also shown that older athletes (>60) not only require more protein, but they need a large quantity of protein, perhaps as much as 40 grams for athletes over 70 yrs, soon after exercise to maximise muscle growth (4). The suggestion here is that although younger athletes can spread their protein intake over the day, older athletes should try to take large intakes of protein after exercise. The research also suggested that older athletes should eat 'fast' proteins such as Whey products. Sixty grams of Whey powder will give the 40 grams of protein after training as recommended. After fencing, I try to take this amount of Whey powder, and sometimes include a protein cookie, which will give me some 70 grams of protein in total

Consuming a larger amount of protein than recommended does not appear to be a problem. Protein satiates your appetite more than other food types, and will give you fewer calories than other food per gram consumed.

Foods high in protein include meat, fish, eggs, milk, cheese, nuts, Greek yoghurt, protein powder legumes, and many more. It is easy to look up the protein content of any food online. Many athletes consume a protein drink made from whey powder and/or a high protein meal bar after exercise.

Does this make any difference I hear you ask? Recent research as reported by Zoe and other research projects emphasise the difference in how our bodies behave and react to food. However I can report from personal experience. Three years ago I had a serious shoulder injury, which entailed immobilising my shoulder for about 8 weeks. This led to muscle weakness and despite exercise I was unable to fully recover my strength and was unable to complete a press-up. I started a high protein diet some 3 months ago, and yesterday I was able to do 7 press-ups (just)!

In conclusion, I would suggest that you look at your protein consumption, and if necessary, increase it perhaps to as much as 2 grams per Kg body weight. Try taking some protein immediately after training, you will probably need a protein drink or protein meal bar. This may help muscle development and there does not appear to be a downside.

<https://www.strengthlog.com/how-much-protein>

<https://www.strengthlog.com/protein/>

<https://www.strengthlog.com/how-much-protein-per-meal/>

<https://www.strengthlog.com/protein-older-lifter-muscle>

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## CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF BOB ANDERSON, CARL MORRIS

A couple of weeks ago Gosport Heritage Society contacted Portsmouth Fencing Club about Bob Anderson, one of Great Britain's most famous fencers who was born not far from where Jenny and I live. It turns out that he was born 100 years ago on 15th September 1922 and the Heritage Society are trying to arrange an event to honour the centenary of his birth.



Many of you will be very aware of Bob's career but for those of you that don't I have written a short precis of his career using articles from The Los Angeles Times and, with their kind permission, an article from the British Academy of Fencing of whom Bob was President for many years.

Bob, probably more than any other fencing coach of the 20th and 21st century, represented the ideal of the Fencing Master both at every level of coaching and competition in Great Britain and also in the wider world of film and television. He was an Olympic fencer who went on to train champions, then to train the coaches of champions, and went on to become one of the world's foremost fight choreographers.

Bob was born in 1922 in Gosport, Hampshire and the beginnings of his career lay in his distinguished record as a competitive fencer during his time in the Royal Marines where he became Foil Champion 5 times, Sabre Champion 6 times and Epée Champion once. He also won the Inter Services Championships numerous times in all three weapons. In September 1950 he won the European Military Sabre Championship and, in both 1951 and 1952, he won the Corble Cup International Sabre Championship.

He then went on to represent Great Britain at the Olympic Games in 1952 and the World Championships in 1950 and 1953 in the sabre event. He finished tied for fifth in the team sabre event at Helsinki in 1952.



On 1st September, 1952, Professor R. J. G Anderson was released by the Royal Marines to be appointed National Fencing Coach to Great Britain.

As National Coach, his main task was to travel around the country running the National Training Scheme and training and qualifying amateur coaches for the then Leader's Award. During this time he also ran courses in personal performance, and presiding (refereeing).

He directed residential courses in all aspects of fencing at the National Recreation Centres and at Loughborough University and supervised courses for the Army, Navy and Air Force Fencing Associations. In addition to all this he was responsible for directing the squad training for all the British Teams.

It would be achievement enough to have had such a profound impact on the sport of fencing in his own country, but Bob's skills were to become known and influential on a far wider scale. Ten days before he was due to compete in the Helsinki Olympics on the British Sabre Team, he was asked to act as double and as fight arranger in the Errol Flynn movie *The Master of Ballantrae*. This was when, after the filming of a duel between the two of them, he achieved the reputation of being 'the man who stabbed Errol Flynn' as a result of a mishap for which Flynn claimed responsibility saying that he was distracted by some fans and forgot to parry (happens to me all the time!).

Flynn insisted upon having Anderson as his double in many of his scenes and Bob's reputation as an inventive and skilled sword choreographer quickly grew.

Actors, including Johnny Depp, Viggo Mortensen, Anthony Hopkins, Charlie Sheen and Catherine Zeta Jones were to learn the skill of the sword under 'Grumpy Bob', the nickname he earned through his relentless desire for perfection. On *The Mask of the Zorro* he put actors through two months of training; sometimes up to 10 hours a day until he was as satisfied with their performance. A refusal to allow shortcuts, mediocrity or excuses characterised his film work as much as it did his work as a fencer, a coach and a teacher of coaches.

Anderson also doubled for David Prowse as Darth Vader during lightsaber duels in two "Star Wars" films. Mark Hamill, who played Luke Skywalker, said in a 1983 interview with *Starlog* magazine that Anderson's doubling as Vader "was always supposed to be a secret, but I finally told George [Lucas] I didn't think it was fair anymore. Bob worked so bloody hard that he deserves some recognition. It's ridiculous to preserve the myth that it's all done by one man."

Anderson's expertise earned the lasting respect of Lucas: "Bob Anderson was essential in defining what a lightsaber duel would look like," Lucas said in a

statement to The Times on Tuesday. “He was the Jedi Master of the original trilogy, training the actors to duel with a new kind of weapon.

“In ‘Empire’ and ‘Jedi,’ Bob donned Darth Vader’s cape and helmet to battle Luke Skywalker in all of the amazing lightsaber battles. It was pure movie magic that Bob became Vader.”



More recently, Bob’s work may be seen in the Lord of the Rings Trilogy and in the Pirates of the Caribbean. The list of all his film credits, both as swordsman and choreographer would take be too long to relate here — suffice to say that if it has been made in England or America in the last fifty years and includes fighting with swords of any description, then the chances are that Bob had a hand in it somewhere. A tiny selection of his credits include The Legend of Zorro (2005: Sword Master), The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (2003: Sword Master); Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl (2003: Additional Sword Trainer); The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002: Sword Master); Die Another Day (2002: Sword Master); The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001: Sword Master); Star Wars Episode VI: Return of the Jedi (1983: Stunt Performer); Superman II (1980: Stunts (uncredited)); Star Wars Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back (1980: Stunt Double for Darth Vader).

After competing in the 1952 Olympics, Anderson went on to coach six subsequent British Olympic teams — from the games in Melbourne in 1956 to Montreal in 1976. Bob retired as National Coach in 1979. However, soon afterwards, he received a phone call from the president of the Canadian Fencing Association inviting him to take on the post of Technical Director for the association. This post was originally meant to last 2 years but he ended up holding it from 1980 to 1988. During this time he developed their Olympic Programme and wrote two books on the sport for Sport Canada and the Coaching Association of Canada. He lived on and off in Ottawa for some 15

years and it was during this time that his association with Star Wars began to develop.

After an amazing life Bob died peacefully in his sleep at a hospital in England in the early hours of January 1st 2012 at the age of 89. He was survived by his wife Pearl and three children.

It is no surprise and quite fitting that Gosport wishes to honour the memory of their famous son. A film showing of The Princess Bride is scheduled for the evening of the 15th September and the local fencing clubs have offered fencing demos on that weekend. There is also talk of a definite Blue Plaque but we're not sure where that will be. What we do know is that the Heritage Society intends to honour Bob's birth on this date every year.

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## THE HISTORY OF WOMEN'S FENCING CONTINUED, MALCOLM FARE



By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the strongest female fencer of her generation was Britain's Toupie Lowther (fig 9) (1874-1944) who started fencing when she was 15 at William McPherson's gymnasium in Sloane Street, Chelsea, where around 70 women learnt to fence. At the age of 21, Toupie won the first international tournament for women in 1895 in Hamburg. One of her most widely acclaimed victories came on 30th April 1898 when she took part in a competition and display held at the military gymnasium in Aldershot. A special train chartered to run from London to Aldershot brought more than 500 spectators. Toupie beat all her opponents, including the army sergeant-instructor. Shortly afterwards in a newspaper interview, she said that "compared with the French professors of the art, no one in England really knows how to fence". An anonymous letter to the editor promptly appeared saying that this was a somewhat sweeping assertion when "such a man as Captain Alfred Hutton still walks this planet".

The incident turned into a *cause celebre* when Toupie's father, Captain Francis Lowther RN, challenged Captain Hutton to a bout with his daughter and promised to pay £50 to a charity if she was defeated, provided her opponent did the same. Hutton, by then 59, declined, saying that such an encounter was impossible, since it would disqualify them both from membership of the Amateur Gymnastic and Fencing Association.

The first club exclusively for women fencers was the Oxford Ladies' Fencing Club founded in 1899. Two years later the London Ladies' Fencing Club opened and soon had 35 members and was the first club to introduce mixed fencing. In 1902 Mrs Robert Doyne organised a fencing display between ladies and gentlemen at Oxford Town Hall. Later that year Toupie Lowther took part in an assault-at-arms at the Empress Rooms, Kensington, between fencers from France, Belgium and England, and decisively defeated the French lady champion, Madame Gabriel.

In 1904 Toupie gave up competitive fencing, although she continued her interest in the sport by becoming chairman of the Ladies' Cercle d'Esgrime, when it was formed in 1906. That year Prof. E G Volland organised the first open ladies' competition, which led the following year to the first women's fencing championship, won by Millicent Hall (fig 10) from a field of 37 competitors

At the Olympic Games of 1924, women's foil was included for the first time, Gladys Davis [Fig. 11] winning the silver medal. Her feat was repeated at the 1928 Olympics by Muriel Freeman and again in 1932 by Judy Guinness. In 1929 a women's event was included in the European/World championships and in 1932 a team foil event was added.



Fig 10



Fig 11



Fig 12

At the 1933 European championships in Budapest, retrospectively recognised in 1937 as a world championship, Gwen Neligan [Fig. 12] became Britain's first world champion. She started fencing with Leon Bertrand and was an awkward and ungainly pupil, making little progress initially. Then, in a fit of inspiration, Bertrand decided to adapt her strong physique to the requirements of the Italian foil. From that moment an ugly duckling was transformed into a swan.



Also at the 1933 championships, the British women's team of Neligan, Betty Carnegie-Arbuthnott, Mary Geddes and Judy Guinness won the silver medal, a feat that was repeated the following year. In 1950 the team of Carnegie-Arbuthnott, Caroline Drew, Mary Glen-Haig, Margaret Somerville and Gillian Sheen (Fig 13) won bronze at the Monaco world championships. The following year, Sheen became World Student Games champion.



Fig 13

But her finest achievement came at the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne, when she became Britain first Olympic champion. She only just qualified for the final of eight after barraging for fourth place in her semi-final poule, but the final was the next day and she suddenly found brilliant form, sweeping through the poule and losing only to Olga Orban of Romania. Orban had beaten her in the two

previous rounds and also had just one defeat, but in the barrage she rushed in too impetuously, anticipating a quick victory. Sheen was able to predict her attacks and calmly parried and riposted to win 4-2.

In the 1930s women in Britain began unofficially to fence epee and by 1939 the Women's Cercle d'Epée had been formed with Mrs W M Sapcote as president. The first women's epee competition was held at the Kensington Country Club, Fig. 15 showing a bout in progress under the control of Madame Perigal, president of the Ladies Professional Fencing Association, with Mrs Sapcote on the extreme right. But women's epee was not formally recognised until the Olympic Games of 1988 and the world championships the following year.



Women's sabre appeared at the 1999 world championships, individual and team, and was added to the Olympic programme in 2004; but, because the IOC restricted the number of fencing medals to 10, there were no women's foil or sabre events that year. Women's team sabre appeared for the first



time at the Olympics in 2008. Finally, in 2017 the FIE announced that from 2020 fencing's quota of medals would be increased to 12, allowing team events at all three weapons to take place alongside the individual events.

Today there are more than 6000 FIE ranked fencers, of whom 193 are British, and the proportion of women is around 45% of both world and GB fencers.

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BRITISH VETERANS  
**FENCING**

If you have a submission for the BVF Newsletter or any comments,  
please email [nicola.broadbartlett@gmail.com](mailto:nicola.broadbartlett@gmail.com)

