

Devon County Fencing Union

Annual General Meeting

Minutes. 30 July 2022. 19.30 Clyst St George Village Hall.

Present: Jim Pilkington (Hon. Secretary), Greg Beacock (Treasurer), Ralph Mills* (Chairman), Alex Scott (Competition Secretary), Richard Foster (SW Rep), Nigel Manning, Val Morrish, Jason Ball*, Josh Letten* (*= attending via zoom)

Apologies: Dave Atkins, Sophie Emmens, Chris Hay, Grace Williams.

1	Minutes from the previous AGM were not available for this meeting, however most attendees at this event had been present at the previous and no concerns were raised. No outstanding matters were raised.
2	Reports were received as follows (Reports appended to these minutes):
	Chairman's Report: Ralph had no report to deliver, as there had been no change in the past 12 months.
	Hon Secretary Report: as appended. Discussion undertaken regarding issues raised by young fencers as this has been raised in Jim's report. In particular, very young fencers attending competition and having to fence in the age bracket above the appropriate one due to a lack of competitors in their own bracket. This was identified as a safeguarding issue and ought to be addressed more widely through awareness for competition organisers and Welfare Officers.
	Treasurer Report: as appended. Discussion undertaken regarding a potential surplus of funds due to lack of spending on Excalibur this year. Potential list of things to spend money on included: equipment (electric pistes or wireless boxes) which could be 'held' by clubs on the proviso that it is surrendered up for Competition events; Advertising or hosting a mass participation event / advertising to increase membership; subsidising young fencers either their BF membership or competition fees to encourage more participation; subsidising coaching development course (level II). ACTION: <u>Committee to discuss appropriate disbursement.</u>
	County Captain Report: as appended. Discussion of Excalibur took place, regarding options for change of venue or means to make this more profitable. Would Devon care to provide a home for the event? It is likely that only the University would have sufficient capacity for 12 pistes over two days, and it is acknowledged that Devon is further from most counties than Bath.
	Regional Rep report: as appended. The only notable discussion was the reminder that ALL CLUBS should please provide up to date contact information for both the lead coach / club admin as well as the appointed Welfare / Safeguarding Officer. This will greatly assist in communication and in supporting welfare officers throughout the region. , ACTION: <u>ALL CLUBS to provide updated contact details</u> to DCFU and to EFSW. RF to collate and communicate out.
	Competition Secretary Report: as appended. In addition to this, the choice and use of Dawlish as a venue (albeit at short notice) was commended and appreciated. Adding the Exeter Open to the calendar was also appreciated, though concerns about whether

	<p>DCFU would be drawn in to the organisation of this in future years when there may be less support from active members of the University Fencing Club is a potential issue. ACTION: <u>DCFU to liaise with EUFC to see whether support required.</u> Further discussion was undertaken proposing that Junior competitions be combined with a training or coaching session in the morning, followed by the competition in the afternoon. This could afford a more 'value for money' day for younger fencers and their families. There was broad support for this approach, hopefully an existing local club coach could lead the morning session to concentrate on a range of skills that can be applied to the afternoon competition session rather than employing an external coach.</p>
	Webmaster Report: No significant Activity
	Junior Rep Report: Not provided.
3	Election of officers:
	The following persons were elected to retain their positions on the committee:
	Chairperson: Ralph Mills (p. GB, s. RF) Ralph happy to continue for one more year, though may be looking to stand down at next AGM.
	Hon. Secretary: Jim Pilkington (p. RF, s. NM) Again, Jim hoping for some support to ease transition so that he can step away from the role.
	Treasurer: Greg Beacock (p JP, s. AS)
	County Captain: No one has approached with interest in this role. Dave Atkins unwilling to commit for a further year at present. Role to be left vacant with the option of co-opting someone into position should the necessity arise.
	SW Rep: Richard Foster (p. NM, s.GB)
	Competition Secretary: Alex Scott (p. RF, s. JP) Alex is hoping to attract some assistance to the day to day running of competitions at least, in order to allow him the opportunity to compete occasionally !
	Webmaster: Ralph Mills (p. AS, s. RF) Ralph happy to continue
	Junior Representative: No interest received for this role. Left vacant for the time being.
3.1	<p>On a wider issue, it was thought that drawing up Job Descriptions might assist in recruiting people to sit on the committee. There's a thought that the unspecified nature of various positions may be off-putting. ACTION: <u>Each Committee member to draw up a short job description, to be available and to be published in advance of the next AGM to widen interest in roles.</u> Vacant position Job Descriptions to be drawn up by committee.</p>
3.2	It was proposed that the incoming BF Area Welfare Officer (AWO) be co-opted onto the DCFU committee or at least be approached to be a corresponding member of the committee as a specialist in their role. This resolution was supported and accepted by the meeting, and the relevant person will be approached when appointed.
4	Any Other Business: Two matters were raised.
	British Fencing Questionnaire on multiple memberships / club affiliation is currently open (Until 31 st July 2022). Members were encouraged to engage with this.
	Proposed dates for upcoming events: Unfortunately it will not be possible to accommodate the Level II coaching as hoped during Oct/Nov. and it is hoped to rearrange for 2023 instead.
4.1	
	There being no other matters to discuss, the meeting ended at 21:15

Reports submitted:

Report from the Honorary Secretary

A year ago I wished to stand down as I had a big business challenge in moving premises and yet here I am still doing it! So firstly, a big thanks to Alex Scott who has often stepped in and dealt with some of the tasks.

I have previously referred to the way the committee of the DCFU functions and by committee, we should visualise not just those holding a post, but also each of the club reps. As I have just recently explained on Facebook, we do not usually have 'committee meetings' but work by mandate, with each officer making the decisions in their area of responsibility, subject to them taking opinion about an intended action.

What I find has tended to happen, is that I refer a matter to just those who are directly involved in whatever the issue is, and not to the whole committee. In essence, an 'executive committee' has evolved. I am not certain that this is the correct way and perhaps the opinion of whole committee should be sought? Or an element of both? For example, on the events calendar – the whole committee, while on the detail of running an event, just the 'executive committee'?

At the same time though, occasionally I have had difficulty in getting opinion. You email and lay out what you are intending to do and no one, or perhaps just one or two reply. You wonder did they get the message or did it go to spam? You are left in the dark.

In my experience the opinion of others about an intention is invaluable and when I get opinion, I often update the plan. The question of 'did they get it' could perhaps be solved by using WhatsApp, in that you can see who has read, but not everyone is on WhatsApp. One does not need a lengthy essay about the matter, but just a 'Sounds OK to me' would be reassuring that one is on the right track.

In the events calendar, a new competition is suggested, a Junior team of 2. I can visualise this in foil for under 13's and epee for those aged 13 but under??? As with the Senior's event, you enter as an individual and on the day the teams of 2 are drawn from entries, that have been ranked. For meeting the occasion when you have an 'odd' number of entries, we have a format that allows the inclusion of a team of 3. It is a poule unique. As it stands, NAFC are offering to run this event, but it is open for another club or the County to take it on.

What requires early decision is the Devon Foil that Phil Westley initiated. Suggestion also has been raised about bringing back an inter-county event: Devon/Cornwall/Royal Navy.

In January 2024, I shall be changing my job and hope and be able to give more time to fencing, but if at this moment, someone else wishes to have a go at being Hon Secretary, the post is up for grabs.

Jim Pilkington

24.7.22

Hi all,

Well, I am glad to report that since fencing activities resumed last September the county has managed to generate a surplus.

The starting balance of £3812.91 which had remained unchanged since pre-covid, now stands at £4,809.31.

Considering the difficulties faced by Jim and Alex, getting the fencing calendar restarted, finding suitable venues (some previously used locations weren't available post covid or were simply too expensive) its not a bad result.

I think this is indicative that the balance between entry fee levels and competition expenditure is probably about right. Although it's worth pointing out that this is only achievable because we don't pay for referees, as any surplus would certainly be cancelled out.

I mentioned in my last report that I would be attempting to get the DCFU account online. Well, after quite a lot of faffing about I'm glad to say it's done. Alterations had to be made to the mandate, with Jim, Alex, and myself being current signatories on the account. Everything is now much simplified, no more IOU's to Jim at the end of the year, hopefully!

Account balance summary to follow.

Greg Beacock (DCFU Treasurer)

DCFU Accounts Summary 2021/2022 (26/07/2022)

Opening Balance £3812.91

	IN	I	OUT
Receipts/Event Entry Fees	£1611.38		
Hall/Venue Hire			£478.98
Medals/Trophies			£56.00
B.F Event Licence			£5.00
Excalibur Entry Fee			N/A
Sundries/Early Bird Prizes			£75.00
Closing Balance-	£4809.31		

County Captain's Report 2022

My report this year carries a recurring theme in that Excalibur never happened. This time for different reasons however probably still linked to Covid.

As in 2020 we had assembled a strong team taken from pretty much every club in the County, and to have to cancel at such short notice obviously came as a disappointment to many.

Excalibur this year was cancelled due to it being financially unviable as there were too few entries and the cost of putting on the weekend has increased. As the role of County Captain at present revolved solely around Excalibur, as the only inter county competition, there is little else to report.

This may be an ideal time to re-evaluate the role of Captain as I would not be surprised if, with great sadness, we were to see the demise of Excalibur. There may be scope for smaller inter county competitions organised individually by Counties. Additionally, these would not necessarily have to be 6 weapon competitions. Anyone who has tried to put together an Excalibur team will know there can be many challenges in getting full team all able to compete on the same weekend, with the costs involved.

I feel there is scope for that to happen however on a personal note, I have been pretty much absent from fencing for some time now and I think it is time for someone more active in the County to take that role, however it develops.

I am therefore stepping down as County Captain. I am disappointed that in 3 years I have not been able to take a team to Bath so I do wish great success to whoever takes on the role.

Dave Atkins

July 2022

SW Report for DCFU 2022

Devon retains its position in the heart of the south west region, contributing fencers and talent throughout the wider region at a number of age groups and levels and this is recognised.

Jim and Alex both thanked for the Regional Ranking Tables, it's very much appreciated. Arlen also recognised for captaining the SW Winton Team. There were some difficulties getting together enough fencers to form the team, but several fencers have mentioned to me the support and guidance from Arlen were invaluable.

Messages from the Regional Committee- which may or may not be picked up in other parts of this meeting:

For welfare issues, a reminder that ALL clubs should have Welfare Officers. If each club could let Tina Black know the contact details. Ideally this should be a generic email address and not a personal one.

There will be an Area Welfare Office appointed by British Fencing, and all clubs should engage with them when they are appointed.

Would be good to have a reinvigorated directory of all clubs and contact details.

Communications – South West Website. Club details / Coach details etc. The website being seen more as a 'directory' pointing people towards clubs in different areas and the competition calendar rather than being an active resource for competition entries / news articles etc.

Acknowledgement that it hasn't been too useful recently, but as with any good data flow, it's only as useful as the information coming in. And there hasn't been much in the way of quality information provided to the webmaster to maintain contact details / website links etc to individual clubs.

Also competition dates for calendar.

Problems with Excalibur – mostly to do with venue costs at present. Looking for alternative venues as Bath Uni is too expensive for the competition to even break even.

Cornwall are very one-weapon focussed and so would like to participate but feel unfairly penalised.

There is a POTENTIAL to combine Excalibur counties... Devon & Cornwall ? Devon & Dorset ?? especially since Dorset are running out of fencing coaches / resources.

POTENTIAL for a smaller scale event along those lines but for just SW counties ? Cornwall / Devon / Somerset / Avon ?? Is there an appetite for something more regional ? Perhaps something for County Captain to consider.

On a personal level, I have recently been RF appointed Vice-Chair of SWF, I feel that I can continue both as a County Rep and in this position, however if anyone else would like to stand for County Rep / South West Liaison, I'd be happy to relinquish.

Devon County Fencing Union
Competitions Secretary's Report 2021-2022

After nearly two seasons of cancellations, competitions are making a comeback. Some restrictions remain, but these are having a decreasing impact – not least when certain of them, such as contact tracing and face mask wearing, are largely ignored even when they're supposed to be a condition of entry to the venue. Thank you to everybody who has helped with organising and running events, of whatever stature and in whatever capacity.

The DCFU calendar came back in October with the Dart Pairs, followed by the Buckland Handicap in November, and the County Championships in their usual places early in 2022. It was particularly gratifying to see the Exeter Open finally get off the ground courtesy of the University, and we look forward to seeing it become a regular fixture in not only the Regional but also the National calendar.

We were unfortunately unable to arrange a suitable time for the Junior Championships, in between venue availability and other commitments or competition clashes. We're aiming to run them in September, soon enough after the Summer break that they can still be considered the '2022' Juniors, and this time get the process moving in time to run the '2023' Juniors in the earlier part of that year.

Numbers for those competitions which ran in both the 2019-20 and 2021-22 seasons showed a slight reduction in entry numbers for the most part, but it's likely that these will recover as people get more used to travelling and competing again – assuming that the rapidly inflating cost of transport and most other things doesn't put too much of a brake back on. We'll do our best to limit any increases in our own prices, but we can't do much about that type of external factor!

We intend to get back closer to a full calendar of competitions and events in the coming season, and perhaps to expand to include more regular coaching and skills development events. Much of this will depend on securing enough initial interest to justify booking the venue and any instructors involved, so please let us know what you would be interested in – if you all stay quiet awaiting announcements of what's happening when, then the answer will be nothing and never! This does of course assume that the inevitable resurgence of Covid-19 and its variants through the winter will not necessitate the return of control measures. We can all play our own individual parts in that, but much of it is outside our hands.

As ever, if anyone is interested in taking on even some of this role I would be only too happy to help them. The past few years have shown how easily a single-point-of-reference can become a single-point-of-failure if that person is for any reason unable to attend an event, and I would rest far easier knowing that the County had a group of people who were comfortable taking on the organising and/or running of a competition. Not least because it would mean less work falling on any single pair of shoulders, and maybe even the occasional chance to be on piste rather than behind the desk!

I look forward to another season of strong competition.

Alex Scott
29/07/2022