

Devon County Fencing Union

Annual General Meeting

Minutes. 16th Sept. 2023 19.30 (20:00)

Clyst St George Village Hall.

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

Apologies received: Ralph Mills, Jack Hughes, Chris Hay, Grace Williams.

1	Welcome and Apologies. The meeting started slightly late as the Hall was inaccessible to start.
2	Minutes of the previous AGM (30JUL22) were approved. It was noted that several actions were still ongoing; The potential to create a discretionary fund from surplus balance to support either club or individual development and/or hardware for the benefit of the County is still worth pursuing. RF to provide details of the proposal currently with EFSW for a similar schema. RF also to pursue clubs for up to date contact details (added to the end of these minutes), and all Committee members to provide a short, but accurate job description.
3	Reports were received as follows (Reports appended to these minutes):
	Chairman's Report: Unfortunately, Ralph has been unable to submit a report for this year.
	Hon Secretary Report: as appended. Questions regarding overlap of junior age groups raised in Jim's report addressed in the Competition Secty's report.
	Treasurer Report: as appended. For clarification, the wireless scoring equipment purchased is in the custody of Jason Ball of Heart of Devon and Tiverton FC's where it is being put to good use, and is regularly made available for county-level competitions. The accounts prepared were in line with current constitution as provided, which allows for Financial Year End dates rather than 'fencing season' year end. There was some discussion as to whether this had already been addressed in previous AGM's, but not reflected in the existing constitution. ACTION: <u>Jim to check previous records of AGM's to see whether Constitution is out of date or needs to be updated.</u>
	County Captain Report: Not submitted. No inter-county level events were held.
	Regional Rep report: as appended. There was some discussion on viability and venue choices for EFSW to host Excalibur at a different venue (UWE / UoEx). This led to a discussion of the possibility of a 'Register of Venues' which might be useful in planning competitions. It was agreed that the Competition Secretary should compile such a list from what knowledge there is out there. There were subsequent questions on the potential for SW events to become more 'mobile' rather than being hosted generally at the other end of Somerset. If we could generate the demand and the capability then it could happen, but would require different organisers each time for venue selection etc if it were to rotate around the region.
	Competition Secretary Report: as appended. There was discussion on opening up Junior competitions to other counties (Dorset/Somerset & Cornwall) to boost numbers.

	<p>There's some concern that the 'outsiders' would swamp the 'local' talent. Some concern about the numbers of Junior fencers that we do have in the County, and how many of those actually compete at DCFU Junior events. ACTION <u>RF to poll clubs on initial responses for this</u>. JL asked about the software used for competitions, and whether this could be extended to others who would like to run competitions. AS advised this is a subscription based software (Fencing Time) and is not transferable, so really needs to be on the one laptop. This is a personal laptop owned by the Competition Secretary. The potential for DCFU to procure a laptop for events comes with its own problems (licencing, responsibility for updates etc.) but this may not be insurmountable. ACTION <u>Josh Letten to investigate potential for this to happen</u>.</p> <p>JL has also asked for more training on this, and Alex advised this will continue at the Dart Epee and Sabre this weekend.</p>
	<p>Webmaster Report: No significant activity – no report received. DG asked whether there might be the option for a second administrator or contributor for the Social Media channels as these seem to be out of date. ACTION: <u>Committee to explore with Webmaster (RM) when availability allows</u>.</p>
	<p>Junior Rep Report: Not provided.</p>
4	Election of officers:
	The following persons were elected to retain their positions on the committee:
	Chairperson: Richard Foster was proposed by Jim Pilkington and seconded by Jason Ball. ELECTED
	Hon. Secretary: Jim Pilkington (p. RF, s. GB) ELECTED
	Treasurer: Greg Beacock (p. JP, s. NM) ELECTED
	County Captain: No one has approached with interest in this role for the second year running. Role to be left vacant with the option of co-opting someone into position should the necessity arise. Constitution to be updated to allow for this to become an ad-hoc position, or to be sufficiently flexible to allow weapon specific Captains as the need arises. (See Action 4.1 below)
	SW Rep: Richard Foster (p. GB, s. AS) ELECTED
	Competition Secretary: Alex Scott (p. RF, s. DG) ELECTED
	Webmaster: Ralph Mills (p. RF, s. JP) ELECTED
	Junior Representative: No interest received for this role. Left vacant for the time being. RF to approach Toby Moore to see if interested in being co-opted into this position. It is hoped that with a body in the role, this will raise the profile amongst the junior fencers and will help generate some 'momentum' amongst them for their representation.
4.1	Constitution to be refreshed to update the position of County Captain and to normalise the financial year end / fencing year end mismatch in the accounting period. ACTION: <u>RF to arrange in conjunction with JP</u>
5	Any Other Business: Three matters were raised.
	Venue: There were some difficulties in getting access to the venue – would it be worth considering an alternative location for next year? Overall thoughts were that the current venue was value for money, and that the access problems on this occasion would be significantly improved next time. It is convenient for many fencers in Devon, and is supported by on-line meeting for those unable to make it in person. Agreed to keep this venue
	Trophies: Following the disruption of covid, many trophies won in 2019/2020 have not been returned. Would it therefore be prudent for the trophies (once recovered from

	last known winners) to be retained by the County and for small shields or plaques to be awarded to the victors ? This was proposed (JP) and seconded (AS) and carried unanimously. ACTION: <u>Competition Secretary to investigate location of existing trophies and arrange for their return.</u> Competition Secretary to arrange for their safekeeping and bringing them out for publicity purposes to the relevant competitions.
	VM advised that the BAF (as opposed to BF) were extending their coach education and development scheme and encouraged clubs to consider the options available to them from this source.
4.1	A vote of thanks to Alex Pilkington for hosting the on-line attendees what proposed and carried unanimously.
	There being no other matters to discuss, the meeting ended at 22:00

Current List of DCFU contacts and Club Representatives:

Club	Club Rep	Contact email
Barnstaple & N Devon	Ralph Mills	barnstaplefencingclub@outlook.com
Exeter City	Richard Foster	raf16belvedere@blueyonder.co.uk
Exeter Uni.		exeterunifencing@gmail.com
Heart of Devon	Jason Ball	jasonpball@gmail.com
Kingswear	Greg Beacock	glbeaco@googlemail.com
Newton Abbot FC	Dave Green	dagreen@outlook.com
Plymouth FC	Peter Barrett	plymouthfencingclub@gmail.com
Plymouth Uni.		pufencing@outlook.com
Sidmouth & E Devon	Nigel Manning	nigelmanning22@gmail.com
Tiverton	Alex Scott	alexjmScott@hotmail.co.uk

(this list to be used by RF to collate a list of the Welfare Officers for each club, and to poll clubs on the state of Junior Level Fencing in the County)

Reports submitted:

Report from the Hon Secretary

The last 12 months has truly been a year of rebuild in an effort to get back to pre-covid levels and speaking about the club at which I am one of the coaches, Newton Abbot Fencing Club, we are getting our numbers back, but we are still with a good 40% down on previous membership.

Having lost Okehampton Club, our new club Heart of Devon is very welcome addition, and from a year ago of questioning who are these people, we now know and is great to see them taking part in in our competitions.

Over the year we brought back what was previously the Devon Open Foil as The Westley Open and added a junior event. From the covid's set back and NAFC having to fence on a Sunday, once evening sessions were again possible, they kept one Sunday a month for a poule unique in Epee. Their plan in the coming season is see what support a junior version would have – just needs 5 to 8 fencers to make it viable.

Junior events are not the easiest to run and generally each fight takes longer. In programming an event I allow 5 minutes a fight for foil and epee, and 4 for sabre. If an under 13, I have found you need an extra minute and under 10's, an extra 3 minutes.

Our last Junior Championships in July did not attract big entries and in part this may have been due to it being in July. We have programmed differently for next year. Unlike our Senior Championships, the Juniors has been strictly limited to those who reside in or are a member of a Devon Fencing Club. I gather the general feeling is that we should keep it that way but bearing in mind the excellent support we had for the Junior version of The Westley from Cornwall, should we not at least allow Cornwall to be included. Might it not make our Junior Championships a more viable and exciting event and at the same time help Cornwall?

Under AOB, I have raised a question about trophies and the number that do not get brought back.

DCFU TREASURERS REPORT 2022-23

The DCFU has done well this year and is gradually getting back to pre-pandemic levels of activity, hopefully this will continue.

From a starting balance of £5074.29 a surplus of £632.20 has been generated, primarily from competition entry fees, and also £80.00 from the auction of an un-claimed Epee.

As well as the regular expenditure of hall/venue hire and trophy/medal purchase this year, the county donated £332.50 to cancer research UK. This was made up of profit made from the Westley Foil and the £80.00 from the un-claimed Epee auction.

Also, purchases of a medal making machine (£170.00) and a Enpointe wireless scoring box (£1068.38) were made.

The purchase of the medal machine will create a cost saving in the long run, as Jack Hughes will be able to produce them himself rather than order them in.

The purchase of the scoring box (Has been put to good use so clearly a great investment) originally formed part of a request made for funding to Devon clubs for equipment and Coach Training. While the scoring box remains the property of the DCFU at present, further requests for club and coach training funding are still up for discussion and is something that can hopefully be resolved at the AGM.

Final balance after all expenditure £4135.61 (31-03-23)

Greg Beacock DCFU Treasurer.

DCFU Accounts Summary 31-03-2022-23

Opening Balance- £5074.29 (31-03-22)

	IN	I	OUT
Receipts/Event Entry Fees	£2448.00		
Entry Fee Refunds			£15.00
Lost Epee Auction	£80.00		
Hall/Venue Hire			£1374.00
Medals/Trophies			£229.32
Medal Making Machine			£170.00
B.F Event Licence			£5.00
Excalibur Entry Fee			N/A
DCFU Meeting Hall Hire			£24.00
Cancer Research Donation (From Wesley Foil)			£332.50
EnPointe Wireless Scoring Box Purchase			£1068.38

Closing Balance- £4135.61 (31-03-23)

Current Balance- £3923.91 (13-09-23)

Devon County Fencing Union AGM 2023: South West Region – England Fencing Representative's Report

It's been a more encouraging year for fencing in the Greater South West, with the unwinding of lockdown restrictions and the return to whatever passes for normality, particularly on the competition front.

The wider region is now self sufficient in coach development, and much has been done recently by Joe Pearce to encourage this. It's also improved markedly in its referee provision too, with several events being used for practical assessments for referees. I'd personally encourage anyone to consider becoming a referee. Participating in a competition where you don't have to self-referee is a lot more enjoyable !

Reminder for every club to have a Welfare Officer and for that person to be easily identifiable. Good GDPR practice is to have contact details set as 'welfare@xyzfencingclub.com' etc... This de-personalises the role and allows for flexibility in the future if/when Welfare Officer changes at the club.

Each welfare officer should be in contact with the regional welfare officer (Tina Black / Yvonne Hopkinson yphopkinson@gmail.com).

England Fencing offers grants to clubs for development projects etc. – this is often undersubscribed and all clubs are encouraged most heartily to consider making applications. Link: [Grants | England Fencing](#)

Another reminder is the SW discretionary Performance and Development Fund for attending international events – particularly useful for younger fencers expanding their experience and moving up a level in their journey. Apply direct through Joe Pearce: chair@swfencing.co.uk

Call for participation at a Regional level – the post of Administrative Secretary (as opposed to a Competition Secretary) has been created to take some of the burden off Jane Browne. Expressions of interest are currently being sought, and anyone who would like further information should contact either Jane, Joe Pearce or myself. Jane is putting together a list of the sorts of activities undertaken, but these are expected to be the general correspondence etc., and not the specific communications around organising BYC or SW competitions.

Additionally, support for Welfare issue would be appreciated and to that end, there is also the position of Deputy Welfare Officer available, to help Yvonne in maintaining coverage. It would be extremely handy to have coverage for welfare matters further down the peninsula. Again, expressions of interest either to Tina Black, Yvonne Hopkinson, Joe Pearce or myself.

Positive matters of communication have also been raised: the use of hashtags #swfencing (?) on Instagram posts helps to raise the general level of communication for fencing in the region. This can be done from club accounts or from personal accounts to help celebrate victories and successes, like the Exeter Open or simply to help to advertise your own club nights and draw in new members. All clubs are encouraged to help raise the profile. Is there something that we (Devon) could be doing to communicate this activity better ?

Sadly, it seems that fencing in Dorset is becoming more and more difficult to arrange, and they are about to lose their county representative. I have assured them that if any Dorset fencers are near enough to Devon, we would happily act as a route to represent them at the Regional level.

SW 'regional' competitions are set to restart this year, probably to be held at Millfield (F/S) and Wellington (E).

There's also talk of Excalibur – two things holding this back being a suitably sized and priced venue (Bath too costly), and also the organisation resources. Historically, this has been a SW event, which was undertaken on our behalf (though we didn't necessarily appreciate this) by Bath Sword. IF the SW were to take it on again, with a suitable venue; is it fair to place the burden of organising it on one resource ? Could we share the burden with a region wide organising committee ?

It might be better to find a smaller, cheaper venue, and resurrect the competition with a smaller pool of teams. Whilst it would be nice to host in Devon, it's always been thought of as being too far from the 'up country' types; however with a reduced, more local focus (Somerset, Devon, Gloucester, H&W, Kent, A.N.Other for example....) could it be viable for a Devon venue ? (and is there appetite within the county or region for this ?)

Apart from that, all seems reasonably healthy in the wider community, and Devon is certainly well placed to represent itself at this level. We look forward to another year of improvements and development.

Richard Foster

Devon County Fencing Union

Competition Secretary's Report 2022-2023

Last season's competition calendar was not immune to disruptions, as schedules continued to recover from Covid-related disruptions and distractions. These do now appear to be settling out, which just leaves the usual Tetris-like question of how to fit different levels of competitions in and around each other.

Events within the county continue to be well supported in general, and it's good to see some new and enthusiastic faces coming through. The main exception to this trend was the Junior Championships, which were pushed to the end of the season in order to avoid exams and as a result lost several fencers to holidays – and to a Cadet Nationals competition in Cardiff which we hadn't really expected to be such a draw. On which note, congratulations to those who've been invited to represent Team GB on the International stage as a result.

Looking beyond those events run by the County, the Exeter Open returned to great success in its slightly different date and venue. Once again it drew fencers from across the country to compete in Devon, and having the finals broadcast live via BF's social media is likely to raise its profile still further. Totnes's competitions continue to go from strength to strength, and a growing number of Clubs are also hosting smaller events on practice nights. I'd particularly like to thank Josh Letten for taking on DT duties for Totnes, as it means I get to fence in those events rather than run the desk !

As you're no doubt aware, this season's competitions will be kicking off on Sunday with the Dart Epee and Sabre, followed by the Westley foil in October and the Buckland Handicap in November. Entry forms for the Westley and the Buckland have now been finalised and will be sent out to the DCFU invitations list later this evening. The Epee County Championships have moved up close after Christmas to make room for the Juniors to be brought forward to late January, and the Foil and Sabre County Championships will follow in their usual places. This isn't set in stone for future years; we'll see how it works and judge from there, especially whether it does prove viable to condense the Junior County Championship into a single day.

On the subject of Juniors, we are looking to expand our offering for the under -13's age groups in particular, as these may not compete against seniors using full-sized weapons. A likely first step would be to introduce Junior divisions to the Dart Epee and Sabre, similar to the current split of the Westley Foil. As with their corresponding Senior Competitions, these would of course be open for visiting fencers, not just those from Devon alone.

We have unfortunately been obliged to raise our competition entry fees slightly this year, in response to increasing costs of hall hire. We believe they still represent good value for money, and we will endeavour to keep things as affordable as is consistent with being viable.

I look forward to the oncoming season, and hope to see many of you on the piste.

Alex Scott

05/09/2023