

The DUELLIST

Newsletter of Elgin Duellist
Fencing Club, Moray, Scotland

Scottish Charity No: SCO39192



Rethinking how we learn

From the olden days of sword fighting to the death, to the modern era of fencing as a competitive Olympic sport, fencing truly has a unique and remarkable heritage.

But the problem with this legacy is the way that fencing is coached in Scotland has not fundamentally changed in over a century.

While some clubs continue to maintain a traditional approach in terms of how to fence, many other clubs – like Elgin Duellist Fencing Club – want to modernise and embrace the evidence based coaching techniques already adopted by other sports.

For EDFC this means that we no longer fetishize technique above all other

aspects of the game but approach fencing as a tactical combat sport of distance and timing.

The way we coach has changed too with a far greater emphasis on learning together with junior members leading many of the coaching sessions. In making this change, we have taken advantage of the Scottish Fencing Coaches Programme and have one of the highest number of introductory Level 1 coaches of any fencing club in Scotland.

This is how Elgin Duellists will learn together and become better fencers. Through the articles in this Newsletter we hope you enjoy reading about our progress to date.



Highland Open 2023

The most northerly ranked fencing competition attracting local, national and International fencers never fails to enthrall and last year's tournament was no exception.

While local fencers excelled the pinnacle of success came when Scottish International and club coach Callum Sutherland staged a heart-stopping comeback to win the Men's Epee Highland Open, prevailing over Tobias Berry (Knightsbridge Fencing Club.)

He had somehow managed to pump himself and the crowd up to boiling point and the winning point was met with rapturous applause and delight for a very popular and gracious fencer who is respected across the fencing community.

Respect too, from a knowledgeable crowd, for Tobias who came so close to downing Callum. Callum is now a two-time Highland Open champion having won the same title in 2019.



No one was more delighted than Head Coach Robin Paterson and Highland Open organiser, who commented, "We are so proud of his repeat victory and how he inspires club fencers, young and older." A local electrician, Callum joined EDFC at the age of 10 and has competed at the highest level in the UK.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Tobias (Berry) finished 3rd in this year's British Senior Men's Championship (Epee) highlighting the high calibre of competition at the Highland Open and adding perspective on Callum's fantastic achievement.

Exultant Callum Sutherland. Photo: Casper Hawkins.

LOCAL FENCERS EXCEL

From a total entry of 112 fencers from 25 clubs, who travelled from as far afield as Shetland to London, to compete in the men's and women's foil, epee and sabre categories over the weekend, Elgin Duellist Fencing Club secured some of its best results in an Open competition with a distinct overall improvement in performance compared to the previous year.



Most notably, in the Men's Foil category, Club Junior Champion Edwin Naughton (15, Peterculter) improved on his 35th position from last year to secure an outstanding 12th place, Reuben Stewart (14, Hopeman) improved on his 42th place to come 28th and fellow Elgin Academy pupil Andrew Paterson (14, Elgin) improved on his 32nd place to secure 24th place. Although not fencing for Elgin Duellist Fencing Club, we were delighted that Joe Joyce (Culloden Fencing Club) retained his bronze medal from last year.

Debutant fencers were Luca Fowles and Joshua Toonen (Foil). Other debutants included Owen Lewis (epee) and Levi Lawson (Foil).

In the Women's Foil category, Fleur Stewart (40, Hopeman) won her last 32 direct elimination match to be knocked out at the last 16 stage by the eventual winner and Lucinda Naughton (18, Peterculter), who fences at Elgin Duellist Fencing but was competing for Liverpool Fencing Club, got through to the last 8 direct elimination stage and came 6th.

We were delighted that so many Elgin Duellists took the brave decision to enter this year's tournament.

For many of our members, this may be the only time that they have an opportunity to compete against some of the top-ranking fencers in Scotland and throughout the UK. With the nearest fencing tournaments usually held in the central belt of Scotland, we were delighted that so many Elgin Duellists took the brave decision to enter this year's tournament.

Fledgling fencer to Child Welfare Officer

From fledgling fencer, age 11, to recently appointed Child Welfare Officer at 28, Lindsay Cant knows the club inside out having joined at its inception.

A Level 1 Coach and also experienced schools plastic fencing coach, Lindsay joins the Club's Management Committee. Safeguarding is paramount and in Lindsay we know our fencers will benefit from her caring, compassionate nature as well as her fencing expertise. Lindsay also makes exceedingly good cakes. Your young fencers are in good hands, their teeth less so!



Lindsay Cant: Then and now. Photo: Casper Hawkins.

Orkney 2023 TRAINING CAMP

The traditional annual three-day training camp involving northern-section fencing clubs took place at Orkney, Summer 2023.

Clubs from, Shetland, Culloden and Elgin Duellists ferried to the Island and we were well represented at this year's fencing stramash. Every year The Duellist requests a photograph in front of the fabled Stones so that our readers down south can see the glory of pre-historic Orkney and this year Reuben Stewart and Casper Hawkins obliged, duelling in front of the silent stones and watching heather.



Photo: Jon Goulding.



A date for your diary:
Get your HO entry in for 2024!

Described by many as the friendliest open competition in the fencing calendar, the Highland Open will be returning to Elgin High School Sports Centre on Saturday 28th (Epee and Sabre) and Sunday 29th September (Foil).

We look forward to welcoming you back to Elgin!

Entries will be through the sport80 website: bf.sport80.com

Contact: Robin Paterson 01343 541302 E: robin1andlinda1@yahoo.com

Fencing Voices:

WHO WE ARE

Brothers Cameron, 16, and Michael Hay, 14, have been fencing with EDFC for three years or so, having first fenced at their after-school club in Buckie Community High School. Buckie Buckieneers was established by Teacher and EDFC fencer Dr. Jon Goulding and has proved to be a pathway for fledgling fencers.

Brothers in arms

The Duellist spoke with the brothers after a recent training session.

Q: What drew you both to fencing and what do you most like about Elgin Duellist Fencing club?

C: I started fencing in 2017, at the wonderful Wallace Fencing Academy in Linlithgow. I was drawn to it because of the uniqueness of the sport and the technicality of it. I was never much of a footballer or a runner-around. The adrenaline of it hooked me the first time I tried it, and I've never looked back since. One of the many things I enjoy about Elgin Duellists' is the large number of dedicated épéeists.

M: I was drawn to fencing by my brother, he'd been doing it for years and convinced me to try it. Once I'd given it a go, I loved it. One thing I like about Elgin Duellists' is that everyone is really friendly and nice.

Q: Having fenced Sabre with you Michael, do you anticipate competitive sabre fencing too and perhaps emulating or bettering Cameron?

M: Absolutely. I've already competed in one of the Youth Development Series competitions last year, and am hoping to enter the Highland Open this year.

For BOTH: Has fencing helped improve your confidence and had a positive impact on other aspects of your life?

C: I'd say so; it's given me a confidence boost in a number of things, and it's an amazing de-stress for me, especially in the midst of exams and school!

M: It has certainly improved my hand-eye coordination and has made me more confident.

Q: What is your favourite weapon and why?

C: Épée, every day of the week. The simplicity of the scoring system appeals to me; I've never been good at working out Priority. But at the same time, there's a great deal of technique and hard work that has to go into it. I think it's the combination of the two that attracted me to it.

M: Sabre, because it's a lot of fun and I like the style of fencing involved.

Q: How serious, ambitious are you both about fencing?

C: I love the sport, and would love to fence competitively on a higher level. Unfortunately I've had issues with my joints in the last year which has meant that fencing competitively was not always easy. But I'm determined to keep fencing for as long as I can!

M: While I'm not sure I want to be fencing for Scotland or anything, I want to do well in competitions and mean to continue fencing for a very long time.

Q: If you could have a fencing superpower what would it be?

C: Looking into the future! I'd always know what my opponent's about to do next!

M: Being able to keep priority all the time.

Sister act

Having introduced you to our brotherly duo, Cameron and Michael Hay, we now spotlight sisters Eva and Alice Tisch.

Q: What drew you both to fencing and what do you most like about Elgin Duellist Fencing club?

A: I started because my big sister Eva loved fencing, I enjoyed playing with sticks in the garden and was surprised to find out swords were real! I love that all the fights at EDFC are for fun.

E: I was first introduced to fencing in Primary 7 when Head Coach Robin Paterson came to my primary school to offer a plastic foil fencing session. I thought it was brilliant fun and soon after joined the club.

Q: Eva, you have been with the club for a couple of years or more and despite some health challenges that made it difficult for you to hold a weapon at times you still fence and it seems to help you?

E: Despite some physical difficulties in fencing, I find it is always mentally engaging and feel like the club is a really positive group of people who have been really enthusiastic and kind. I think the diverse range of experience and age in the club really helps to foster a remarkable sense of community.

Q: Does fencing help in other areas of your life?

E: I think fencing is great for overall balance and confidence, and is a really healthy mental and physical sport.

A: I feel energised and happy after fencing and it makes me have showers more!

Q: What is your favourite weapon and why?

E: I particularly like foil because it's light and doesn't require a lot of strength, but has a lot of finesse. I think things like hits with priority bring a brilliant intellectual aspect to fencing foil.

A: Foil. It's the only one I've used so far.

Q: Do you have any fencing ambitions?

A: To have loads of fun

Q: If you could have a fencing superpower what would it be?

BOTH: In unison: Being able to extend my arms!

Cameron Hay, left, and brother Michael. Photo: Casper Hawkins.



Q: Cameron, you have already tasted success in the Under 15 Boys' Epee category at the Scottish Youth Development Series and took part in the 2023 Highland Open. Do you enjoy competing, testing yourself and especially having a medal around your neck!?

C: I do love a good competition, and it's certainly rewarding to get a medal out of it. At the end of the day, though, I'm always in it for the fun of the sport, not to win.

Alice Tisch celebrates a Leap Year Birthday by baking a cake for us.



Owen

STRIKES GOLD

Rising star Owen Lewis, 14, struck gold by winning the under 15 Boys' Epee title at the recent Scottish Youth Fencing Championships and in so doing added to the clutch of medals he harvested in last year's Scottish Youth Development Series.

A second year pupil at Forres Academy, Owen is a member of the Scottish Fencing Pathways Squad and his hard work and dedication is being rewarded. His Elgin Duellist Fencing Club Epee coaches Callum Sutherland and Jon Goulding remarked, "Owen has a fantastic positive attitude and win or lose he's always able to learn from the experience. We are both delighted for him. The result is even more encouraging because Owen has another year to compete in this age group category."



Owen on the right handside holding off an attack at the Highland Open 2023.

Club Championships 2023/24



A **RECORD 31** Elgin Duellists took part in the annual Elgin Duellist Fencing Club Championships held over two weeks last December.

From left to right: Young fencers Elias Townsend, Alice Tisch, Isaac McKenzie and Keir McNicholl



This is a fun competition and is focused on preparing our younger fencers for the competition circuit. However, Duellists ranged in age from nine to 71 years in this five hit electric foil tournament.

This year, club coaches were delighted to see some very closely fought matches and, for the first time ever in running the competition, no single fencer won all their matches. Repeating last year's success, the ex-Orkney fencing club member, Joe Joyce (28) won the senior title. Similarly, the junior title was retained by Edwin Naughton (15). This rounded off a fantastic season for the Cults Academy pupil. The top female fencer was Lindsey Cant (28), who joined the club when she was 11 years of age.

But the most outstanding performance was given by Owen Lewis (13). The second year Forres Academy pupil won the Sally Low Quaich for the Most Improved Fencer. Last year, Owen won only two fights but this year he only dropped three fights overall and showed great tenacity in his well-timed beat attacks. This also rounded off a brilliant and successful year for the Scottish Fencing Pathways Training Programme fencer. Owen won bronze and silver medals in the Scottish Youth Development Series for his age group.

It was great to see that every Duellist who competed won hits and our younger members should be congratulated for their courage in taking part.



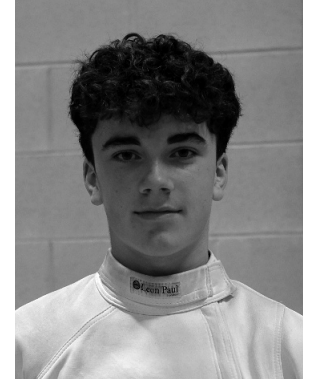
The most Improved Young Fencer, Owen Lewis



Crossing Swords

SHEFFIELD STEEL FOR EDWIN

In his first British Youth Championships held in Sheffield in May, Edwin Naughton came 26th out of 76 entries in the Under 16 Boys Epee Category. The Cults Academy pupil and junior club champion was knocked out in the last 32 direct elimination stage. *This is a very promising result Edwin!*



Supporting GOOD MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

Elgin Duellist Fencing Club is one of the first 11 Moray based clubs to have completed the Moray Mental Health Accredited Scheme for Physical Activity.

CHANGING LIVES
THROUGH SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Recognising the important role that club coaches have in supporting good mental health and well-being, Elgin Duellist Fencing Club was delighted to be

part of this new initiative developed by the Moray Wellbeing Hub and Moray Council's Sports Development Team.

Over a six month period, coaches took part in five Mental Health workshops covering Mental health, first aid, suicide prevention and trauma informed approaches.

As well as increased confidence to provide appropriate support for our members, Elgin Duellist Fencing Club is now working with the other recently accredited clubs to create an online space tailored to support good mental health and well-being for sports club members across Moray.



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Duke of Edinburgh Awards

Elgin Duellist Fencing Club has always been more than just 'learning how to fence'.

We share the same commitment as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme to help young people learn new skills, build their confidence and thereby change their lives for the better.

As the first local authority school in the UK to pilot the DofE Scheme, it is fitting that two of our Elgin Academy pupils, Andrew Paterson and Joshua Toonen (both 15) tell us how fencing is supporting them to achieve their silver award:

Joshua Toonen

"Fencing was a good choice for DofE as I do it quite often and enjoy it a lot. I also think it is full enough to write evidence every day I go to fencing."



Andrew Paterson, left, and Joshua Toonen

Andrew Paterson

"I have found fencing is a great activity to use for my DofE as it helps develop my interpersonal skills and my personal growth, which is what the programme is all about.

Integrating my passion of fencing into my silver award journey has led me to complete my Level 1 coaching award and I've now led club footwork sessions and supported the other club coaches in our weekly blade work sessions.

DofE has encouraged me to explore further something I enjoy doing. It has noticeably led to improvements in my fencing skills, coaching techniques and has also boosted my self confidence."





Photo: Jon Goulding

The most scenic training camp in Britain

PERHAPS

We make no apology for including another photograph from the 2023 North Section Summer Training Camp, this year hosted in Orkney, once upon a long time ago, part of the Norwegian Kingdom. Evidence of Orkney's prehistoric past is everywhere on the Island and here two fencers duel in front of the, hauntingly beautiful, Ring of Brodgar stone circle.

Culinary cuts - Highland Open

The always open snack bar at the Highland Open has become semi-legendary for offering a place to fuel up from the hub-hub of the cut and thrust on the pistes.



Our, ahem cheese and pickle toasties are always greatly in demand and often unusual and nurturing dishes find their way on to the table brought in by Parents. This year Don Toonen, parent of EDFC fencer Josh, made Dutch Bitterballen (beef ragout croquettes). Served hot they were delicious and he has been tasked with serving more

this year. In addition Lindsay Cant's homebakes are always in demand and this year she created a 'lunging fencer' cake.

As you can see Lindsay enjoys eating her own creation!



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Elgin Duellist Fencing Club has a designated Child Welfare Officer: Lindsay Cant.

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