
Foundation for Scottish Fencing

Chairpersons Report

AGM - 15th December 2021



Introduction

The Foundation for Scottish Fencing is a not for profit Scottish charity SC036116 which supports and encourages fencing in Scotland by running Youth Development Series (YDS) events for U9/U11/U13/U15 age groups and also the Tri-Weapon cup team event for older fencers (over 13s i.e. cadet/junior/senior/vet).

All profits for the foundations fencing events are used to fund grants to purchase fencing equipment for Scottish schools, clubs and universities, further enabling and encouraging participation in fencing in Scotland.



Our annual AGM would normally have been held on the last YDS Event of the fencing season in the event fencing hall, however due to Covid for the second year running we will be holding our AGM online.

It's been yet another difficult and challenging year for everyone, in both private and working lives, in schools and universities, let alone fencing clubs and organisations. We hope that everyone is safe and well, and we look forward to meeting you all in person at some point in the future in a fencing hall.

Acknowledgments

Firstly, I would like to extend my thanks to all the coaches, referees, supporters and volunteers who give up their time to support our Youth Development Series (YDS) events and the young fencers in Scotland. The competitions would not exist without volunteers. From providing filed rolls for our cafe to refereeing, coaching and preparing the fencers to compete. All the Foundations supporters and volunteers make a collective contribution to fencing in Scotland. So a BIG THANK YOU ALL!

We'd also like to express our thanks and awe to the coaches and clubs who have managed to keep fencing, restrictions permitting during the last year.

Review of 2020/21 Youth Development Series Events

As we're all aware due to Covid there were no YDS events in the 2020/21 season. Our last YDS event was February 2020 as we postponed and subsequently cancelled our March 2020 YDS event two weeks before lockdown in March 2020.

However the Foundation did take it first tentative steps back to competitions by holding our En Garde Edinburgh event at St Georges School for Girls in Edinburgh in August 2021 as the start of the 2021/22 season.



The event was a fun mixed gender poule unique format with a low £10 entry fee to introduce the fencers back to competition, but also to help the Foundation in understanding the issues in running a competition with tight covid restrictions before our YDS events return.

Examples of Covid restrictions in place at the event included only referees/fencers & event officials allowed in the venue, lateral flow tests taken before the event for all fencers/referees/event officials, pre-event health check completed, temperature taken at check-in, masks & visors worn, each piste had hand sanitisers and wipes for equipment, one way systems in operation, social distancing, outdoor cafe & armoury, contactless payments for cafe/armoury, drop off/pickup.

The event was also a chance to use the Sport80 entry platform for the first time. We initially switched to Sport80 after meetings with British Fencings event organisers forums to make contact tracing easier should it be required, but we've found that Sport80 has also taken away the admin pain associated with taking payments/managing entries/checking memberships/QR check-in. It also allows bulk and selective email communications, which due to the ever changing covid restrictions was invaluable for our August event. So we will continue to use Sport80 for our future events.

The event was fully wireless thanks to the Foundation purchasing 4 x wireless fencing boxes and Salle Holyrood kindly lending 6 wireless boxes. This helps reduce touch points which is important at this time, but also means we do not have to hire a van to transport 10 heavy spool and score boxes or extend hall hire for set up/breakdown which should save £600-700 a five event season. The downside of wireless fencing is you did find yourself wandering onto a live piste as there was no trailing wires to remind you where not to step.....but wireless is definitely the way forward. I believe wireless boxes will be the preferred purchase for clubs and organisations in the next few years.

The weather was great so we held a break halfway through the competition and escorted everyone to the outdoor courtyard area at St Georges, so all the fencers, parents and coaches could have 30 minutes to chat outdoors with friends they have not seen in person in 17 months. This for me was the highlight of the day.

I'd like to thank all the volunteers, referees and coaches who all refereed at the event, and the fencers for following the covid protocols without issue. It was a new experience for us all managing and dealing with the Covid protocols, but it did not detract from the day and collectively we succeeded in hosting a great event. I'd also like to thank Peter Kilpatrick for supporting the outdoor cafe and kindly donating fresh filter coffee machines, and to Martin Buckley for providing armoury for the event....Which was welcomed by the fencers who's kit hadn't been used in competition in 17 months.

The Foundation would also like to express their thanks to Scottish Fencing for their continued support in covering the hall hire fees and for providing score boxes for this event.

We do have two YDS events planned for February and March 2022 with one more likely in April/May. However we have to be pragmatic with the Omicron variant currently causing concern, so we may still have to retain Covid restrictions as at the previous August event, (weather permitting for Cafe) or worst case postpone to a later time.

It will likely be after the xmas break before we will know what impact Omicron will have on the February/March events. We will continue to monitor and follow Scottish Government guidance and our volunteers, fencers, coaches, parents/guardians and fencers safety will always be our first consideration.

Season Entries

This AGM would normally report on 2020/21 season entry numbers, however sadly due to Covid there were no events in 2020/21 season.

At the last December 2020 AGM we anticipated there may be a dip in event numbers for the 2021/22 season due to the impact of Covid with the majority of fencing clubs in Scotland closed, and the inability to hold fencing classes and taster sessions in schools meaning we anticipated that U11 age groups may be lower at the 2021/22 seasons events.

This has proven to be correct and you can see the impact on the U11 numbers at the August 2021 En Garde Edinburgh event. We're hopeful that more numbers will compete at the YDS events in Feb/March as clubs are now open and new fencers may be ready to enter in Feb/Mar events. Sport80 entry is already open for the Feb/March events which is also attracting a few entries from English clubs.

As the figures in the table below show, the entries at the August 2021 En Garde Edinburgh event were 28% lower than the 2019/20 season with U11 age groups seeing the biggest impact as expected with a massive 55% drop in entries compares to the last Edinburgh event in Feb 2020.

It also means that the U11 dip means it will potentially taking two or more years to recover back to pre-covid event numbers as the current dip in U11 numbers will follow year on year through to dipping in U13 and then U15 etc.

We know that some clubs such as Salle Ossian (Sabre), Salle Holyrood (Foil), WFFC (all) and WLFC (all), Fencing Fun (plastic) have been active indoors and out during the last year, and new clubs starting up such as Forth Valley and Dunedin started up during this period. This along with most if not all clubs now being able to open their doors in August and start training again means there is optimism, however it will take time to recover to pre-covid event numbers.

Season 2019/20 - 2021/22 Comparison.

	Stirling 27th Oct 2019	Dunfermline 8th Dec 2019	Edinburgh 8th Feb 2020	En Garde Edinburgh 29th Aug 2021	Delta %
U9 Mixed Foil	0	1	1	1	0%
U11 Boys Foil	8	6	11	6	(45%)
U11 Girls Foil	0	0	1	0	(100%)
U13 Boys Foil	18	19	16	11	(31%)
U13 Girls Foil	5	7	6	2	(67%)
U15 Boys Foil	7	4	6	12	100%
U15 Girls Foil	7	4	4	5	25%
Subtotals	45	41	45	37	(18%)
U9 Mixed Sabre	1	1	2	1	(50%)
U11 Boys Sabre	1	1	3	0	(100%)
U11 Girls Sabre	1	1	2	2	0%
U13 Boys Sabre	7	9	6	4	(33%)
U13 Girls Sabre	6	7	6	1	(83%)
U15 Boys Sabre	4	4	7	8	14%
U15 Girls Sabre	2	2	2	3	50%
Subtotals	22	25	28	19	(32%)
U11 Boys Epee	1	2	2	1	(50%)
U11 Girls Epee	1	1	3	1	(67%)
U13 Boys Epee	1	1	1	2	100%
U13 Girls Epee	0	0	2	0	(100%)
U15 Boys Epee	4	3	3	2	(33%)
U15 Girls Epee	5	4	3	1	(67%)
Subtotals	12	11	14	7	(50%)
Totals	79	77	87	63	(28%)

** Note En Garde Edinburgh was a mixed gender event, but numbers have been split for analysis purposes.

Developments

As well as the Foundation for Scottish Fencing committee planning and managing all the YDS events, the committee strives to make improvements on the previous year's season. The biggest challenge in the last year was returning to competition in the midst of Covid. The Foundation hosted the first all weapon fencing event in Scotland since lockdown began 17 months before with our En Garde Edinburgh August 2021 event. I'd like to thank the Foundation committee and all our supporters, referees, coaches, parents and fencers who made this happen as this was a much needed morale boost in what has been an otherwise difficult and challenging 17 months for everyone.

For the new 2021/22 season we charged a £10 entry fee for the August En Garde Edinburgh fun event, and the future Feb/Mar 2022 YDS events have maintained the same entry fees rates as they have been for a few years now.

YDS early bird rate is £12.50 and £16.00 standard entry. We also offered an additional 30% discounts for sibling and two weapon entries. If you take advantage of the early bird rates you can fence and purchase a lunchbox all for £15.00!

We will continue try to keep our entry fees as low as possible. It's the profits from the cafe and all the wonderful people who provide rolls and tray bakes that makes a major contribution to the funds available for grants. So again thank you.

The Foundation purchased 4 x wireless fencing boxes in preparation for the 2021/22 season. This not only helps reduce touch points which is important at this time, but also means we do not have to hire a van to transport heavy spools and score boxes or extend hall hire for piste set up/breakdown which should save a minimum of £600-700 per five event season.

We introduced contactless payments for the first time at the En Garde Edinburgh event. All cafe and armoury payments were completely contactless, which again reduces touch points. We Also instigated online banking for the first time which has made transferring funds such as for Covid grants easier and quicker.

The Foundation used the British fencing Sport80 platform for our event entries for the first time which has taken away the admin pain associated with taking payments/managing entries/checking memberships/QR check-in. We will continue to use Sport80 for our future events.

As a registered charity the Foundation for Scottish fencing registered with Amazon Smile, where shoppers can choose the Foundation as their chosen charity to receive 0.05% of the purchase price whenever they shop on amazon. This has generated almost £20 in donations since May, which considering they are made up of 0.05% of purchase price is quite an achievement, so a big thank you to everyone who has chosen the Foundation as their charity on Amazon Smile.

We continue to be engaged with Scottish Fencing with regular zoom meetings during lockdown. We continue to be part of the Scottish Fencing events forum where all event organisers in Scotland meet regularly.

Scottish Fencing fund our event hall hire, so thanks to Vinny, Liz and the Scottish Fencing board for their continued support.

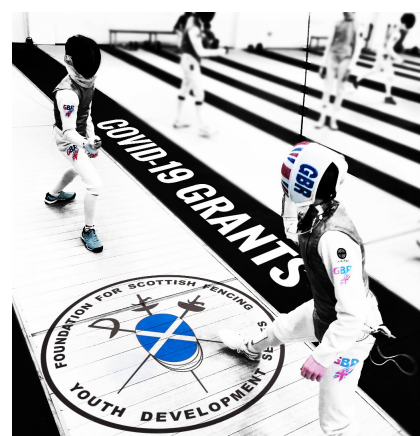
Grants Awarded

In the 2020/2021 season, although no fencing took place the Foundation for Scottish Fencing is very proud to have offered a £250 Prepare, restart, Rebuilt Covid-19 grant to all 41 registered fencing clubs in Scotland.

22 fencing clubs applied and 22 clubs were awarded a full £250 grant award. This includes every Scottish University fencing club.

The following clubs were awarded a Covid-19 grant.

- Aberdeen University Fencing Club
- Braveheart Fencing Club
- Dunblane Fencing Club
- Dundee University Fencing Club
- Fencing Fun
- Edinburgh Fencing Club
- Edinburgh University Fencing Club
- Elgin Duellist Fencing Club
- Glasgow Caledonian University Fencing Club
- Glasgow University Fencing Club
- Heriot Watt University Fencing Club
- Livingston Fencing Club
- Orkney Fencing Club
- Salle Holyrood Fencing Club
- Salle Ossian Fencing Club
- St Andrews University Fencing Club
- Shetland Fencing Club
- Strathclyde University Fencing Club
- Stirling Fencing Club
- Stirling University Fencing Club
- West Fife Fencing Club
- West Lothian Fencing Club



Committee Nominations

I'd like to thank the Foundation committee for their time and support during what has been a difficult and challenging period. I'd like to express the Foundations thanks to George and Kelly Cobb who are stepping down as cafe co-ordinators at the end of this season for all their fantastic efforts in managing the YDS cafe at all our events, particularly at the last event where Covid protocols made it challenging. The way you run the cafe is appreciated by all the fencers, parents and supporters and by the Foundation committee. Its generated thousands of pounds over the last few years, which have directly contributed to funding grants.

And we'd also like to express our thanks to Fiona Hetherington who has been our Child Protection Officer/floor manager and piste set up and breakdown person, and to Hugh Kelly who floor manager and piste set up and breakdown person who are also both standing down at the send of this season.

You have all contributed massively to the Foundation so thank you for all for your work at the events and with the committee.

We would normally hold our AGM at the end of season YDS finale where were would have 80-100 parents and supporters at the AGM meeting. As this years AGM is online, clearly we will not have the same attendance as normal or the opportunity to seek volunteers in person. With the Omicron variant looming large, there may still be the need to exclude supporters from event venues, which means engaging volunteers in person will be a challenge.

We will continue to promote and request the need for volunteers over the coming months and as such can ask people to consider joining the committee or volunteer to help at our events. Hopefully at our next AGM will be in a fencing hall and new committee members and volunteers will come forward.

The majority of contact between the committee is via the Foundations closed WhatsApp and Facebook groups, particularly prior to YDS events, but all told it's not a laborious amount of time required to be part of the committee. All current members have full time jobs and are parents of fencers.

In terms of what type of volunteers are required for the committee, its doers. We really can't function as a committee solely with "talkers" and "ideas" people. We do need a balance with the majority of the committee being doers who commit to attend each YDS event in various capacities.

Proposed Change to Constitution

Due to the extraordinary circumstances of the last 20 months, and the inability to hold events, and subsequently seek volunteers, we propose amending the Foundations existing constitution to enable committee members continuing in their posts (if they wish) until such time as volunteer is sought.

3.4. Office bearers shall be elected at an annual General Meeting and shall serve for 12 months. At the end of this period the Office Bearers may submit themselves for — or may be put forward for — re-election but in any event shall not serve in post without interruption for more than three years in any single function.

Current Text:

In exceptional circumstances one of the office bearers may serve for a further year in their role to allow continuity of F4SF function on the understanding that recruiting for this role will be prioritised for the coming season.

Proposed Text:

In extraordinary circumstance, such as has prevailed during 2020 & 2021 where Covid prevented fencing and competitions, and as AGMs were held online rather than in a fencing hall, office bearers may continue serving in their role for a further year or until such time that recruitment of volunteers is possible, to allow continuity of the F4SF function on the understanding that recruiting for this role will be prioritised for the coming season.

Office Bearers and Committee

Chairperson

Current: David Barbour
Nomination - David Barbour

Vice-Chair

Current: Vacant

Treasurer

Current: Fiona Morrison
Nomination: Fiona Morrison

Secretary

Current: Fiona Hetherington
Nomination: Vacant

Cafe Co-Ordinator

Current: George & Kelly Cobb
Nomination: Vacant

Child Protection Officer

Current: Fiona Hetherington/David Barbour
Nomination: David Barbour

Competition Co-Ordinator

Current: Committee
Nomination: Committee

Committee members

Current members: Marie Steele (online banking/First Aid), Hugh Kelly
Nominations: Marie Steel

Note: four committee members are standing down at the end of this season, it means the committee will then consist of only David Barbour, Marie Steele and Fiona Morrison.

This is the same situation we found ourselves in 5 years ago Edinburgh with 80-100 people in a Fencing hall at the AGM, and not a single person volunteered to join the committee. I had discussed with Marie and Fiona before that AGM that if no one volunteered we may consider closing the Foundation, however we made the decision at that time to continue, and I'm glad we did. We were lucky to gain further committee members over the next couple of years, but now those members are standing down, so it's back to David, Marie and Fiona as the only committee members when this 2021/22 season ends.

The three off us have been on the committee in various roles for 6+ years and we have committed to stay on for the following 2022/23 season, however if no-one volunteers to join the committee either at this 2021 AGM, the 2022 AGM or during the 2022/23 season, we will all stand down and the Foundation will not continue to exist. I will be contacting all the clubs who attend the YDS events to seek volunteers to join the committee.

Committee

- Chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Cafe Co-ordinator
- Welfare Officer
- Competition Co-ordinator (optional)
- Grants and Funding Manager (optional) Communications and Social Media (Optional)

Secretary

- Minute the committee meetings and AGM
- arrange and organise committee meetings
- Schedule zoom/conference calls for committee meetings
- Set meetings agendas in consultation with chair/committee
- Set AGM agenda in consultation with chair/committee.

Treasurer

- Responsible for banking cash, cheques, PayPal payments and online banking
- Co-ordinates payment of supplier invoices and Foundation expenses.
- Prepares annual report for OSCR charity commission.
- Organises independent examiner of end of year accounts,
- Maintains accurate record of the Foundation for Scottish fencing finances.
- Monitors and reports on cash flow after each YDS event.
- Prepares and presents accounts report at annual AGM

Cafe Co-ordinator

- Co-ordinates volunteers to service in the YDS cafe
- Manages stock for the YDS cafe.
- Manages lunchboxes purchased in advance for YDS cafe
- Co-ordinates volunteers for making filled rolls and home baking in sufficient quantities for the volume of fencers.
- Manage cafe expenses and receipts
- Ensure cafe ingredients are highlighted for nut and gluten allergies

Event Child Protection Officer

Event child protection officers must complete the welfare and safeguarding course as defined on the British fencing website. (Scottish Sport Scotland training courses are different to BF courses)

All training costs will be met by the Foundation for Scottish Fencing

CPO's are the first point of contact for young people, volunteers, parents or guardians where concerns about welfare, poor practice or child/vulnerable adult abuse is identified.

Further information is available on the welfare section of the British fencing website:

<https://www.britishfencing.com/welfare-zone/>

Out with volunteering for the committee, you can also volunteer to Floor Manage, DT, First Aid, help setting up pistes at each event. We will train you and fund any required courses such as first aid and welfare. Note committee members with an active role at events such as floor managing, welfare, first aid will have to complete a PVG check via Scottish Fencing. Our committee will also have British fencing supporters memberships which the Foundation will fund whilst part of the committee.

Future Events

YDS Edinburgh I - U9/U11/U13/U15 Foil/Epee/Sabre

Date: Sunday 6th February 2022,
Venue: St Georges School for Girls, Edinburgh

YDS Edinburgh II - U9/U11/U13/U15 Foil/Epee/Sabre

Date: Sunday 27th March 2022,
Venue: St Georges School for Girls, Edinburgh

Entry via Sport80: <https://bf.sport80.com/events>

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