

WHITCHURCH FENCING CLUB'S FIRST INTRA-CLUB CHAMPIONSHIPS

By Beatrice Fannon

Whitchurch Fencing Club held its first intra-club championship on Tuesday 28th April, which has been introduced to coincide with its first-year anniversary in its new premises at Rhiwbina Memorial Hall, Cardiff, and the decision to rebrand the club as an 'épée-only club'.

The Whitchurch Club Championship is the Club's latest attempt to improve its service to members and consequently make the club more successful. So far, the club has improved coaching provision with the advent of Lyndon Martin as Senior Coach, brought in lower subscription rates, introduced BAF-accredited Proficiency Awards, and launched a Welsh-closed, Intermediate competition (The Whitchurch Shield). An indicator of the success of such initiatives is that the club has more than tripled its membership.

Club Secretary Michael Clemitson said: "Although we are a small club, we have an important function to play in the competition calendar in Wales. We are now seeking to improve our own competitive spirit within the club itself."

The Whitchurch Club Championship has been introduced in order to enable club members to compete in a friendly atmosphere, but with all the trappings of a normal competition, including Fencing Time, FIE scoring sets and referees.

Steve Poyser, one of the club's recently qualified coaches, commented: "The competition enables social fencers to have experience of the application of the rules of the game. When you are fencing at club level,

the rules are not always adhered to and this can give a distorted view of the game. It is easy to forget that, more often than not, it is through competing that fencers learn the rules. Not knowing the rules, however, can in itself be a barrier to entering competitions."

The competition was run as a pool unique, fenced to 5 hits/3 minutes, owing to the number of entrants and time constraints. A pool unique has the added benefit of ensuring that fencers remained occupied throughout the competition, and that the winner came as more of a surprise at the end.

The Club has purchased a modern, abstract fencing trophy to distinguish it from the cup and shield that it awards at its two Welsh Closed competitions, The O'Sullivan Cup (one-hit épée) and the Whitchurch Shield (Intermediate épée). The winner is allowed to keep the trophy for a year. There were also medals and prizes for the top three positions, as well as a prize for the highest-placed beginner.

The competition was well attended by club members, and even included fencers who had recently completed a beginners' course. The competition was a closely fought contest, in which everyone won at least one bout. There were many 4-5 results, which, had they fallen out differently, would have significantly altered the final placements. Krystof Gibbon was the clear winner with 9 wins. Adrian Stoneman and Rupert Nute both scored 7 wins, but Adrian just beat Rupert to second place with a higher indicator.

Tom Bennett, who was awarded a prize for being the 'highest-placed beginner', shared his impressions of his first competition: "The evening was a fantastic way to experience a competition environment for the first time, with the added benefit of being in the very sociable environment of a club that meets

every week. Everyone has been tremendously welcoming and patient with the beginners, and really I look forward to my fencing every week. The competition night was a great master class too, thanks to being up against so many experienced fencers in one evening."

Lyndon Martin, the Club's Senior Coach, is keen for club members to start competing as early as possible: "Competing is an integral part of the sport, but it is often the case that there is not much enthusiasm for entering competitions, which is both disappointing for competition organisers and bad for the sport in general. Initiatives such as this are important ways of trying to introduce a competitive edge to the club night. It takes some of the anxiety out of competing, and hopefully will encourage more club fencers to take the plunge on the competition circuit."

Full details and results are available on the Club's website: 

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Photograph of the winners (from left to right): Adrian Stoneman (2nd place), Krystof Gibbon (1st place), Rupert Nute (3rd), Tom Bennett (highest-placed beginner).



Group shot (from left to right): Steve Down, Krystof Gibbon, Jake Tucker, Tom Bennett, Mike Tucker, Chris Tatham, Joe Stoate, Rupert Nute, Liz Gulliver, Adrian Stoneman, and Steve Poyser.