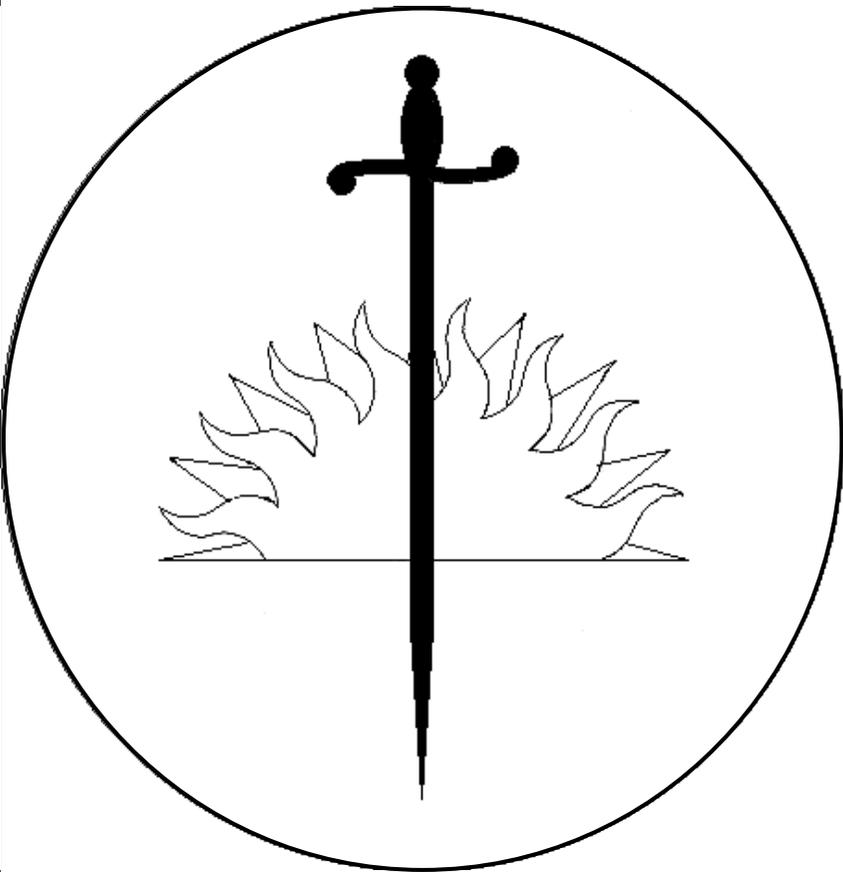


Punta 'Dritta

January AS XXXV

Newsletter of The Royal Guild of Fencē



This is not an official SCA publication, and does not in any way reflect SCA policy

From the Editor

Greetings all,

Welcome to the first issue of Punta 'Dritta (italian: Straight Thrust). A few months ago I started tossing around the idea for a Guild newsletter and finally we have a finished product. Many thanks to David for helping me get the ball rolling. Thanks also to Michael, Francois, Ibn Jelal, Silfren, and Fergus for their contributions.

The West Kingdom is fairly spread out in terms of geography, especially with one principality in another country. Our numbers also aren't that great so we have a small group of fencers spread over a large distance. This means its very hard to get information distributed to the entire fencing populace if we're relying on word-of-mouth and email. The purpose of this newsletter is to assist in getting information to fencers. To help this I ask that people please download a copy of the newsletter and distribute it to the fencers in your group who do not have internet access. Alternatively we can arrange to have a hard-copy mailed to them. See the "How to subscribe" section at the end of the newsletter.

In each issue I hope to provide several things:

* A section for the KRM and PRM's to distribute marshallate information. Note that we have a Q&A section for the KRM. If you have questions for Michael, please send them in and we'll get them answered.

* A section for the Lord Guildmaster to discuss issues pertaining to the Royal Guild of Fence and to provide information on period fencing styles and practice.

* A directory of group marshals and Guildmasters. If you don't see your name listed and you would like it listed, send me your details. I hope to establish a bit more of a network of marshals so that when groups need extra marshals for authorisations or events they can contact them easily.

* Articles on anything to do with fencing. These can be articles on constructing equipment, period fencing styles, humorous anecdotes, anything so long as it relates to fencing in some way. (I'd love some black and white artwork if anyone is feeling artistic)

* Also event and prize notices. That way we can up the attendance at events with rapier combat and make sure that there are enough people for someone to play a prize successfully. (This section is pretty empty for this issue so please send in event notices to help fill it up)

I will welcome contributions from anyone so please if you have stuff you think would be appropriate, send it in. It also works the other way. If you would like to see an article on something in particular, let me know and I'll see if I can find something.

I hope you enjoy the first issue of Punta 'Dritta!

Yours in Service,
Artemisia da Quietto d'Arzenta

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95358

From the Lord Guildmaster of France

Welcome to the first issue of the Guild Newsletter. I hope that this will become a regular and valued newsletter for the kingdom with plenty of information on Period Civilian swordplay and related fields of study.

The Guild requires plenty of study as people progress through the ranks, and I wish to make this newsletter the standard place of publication for these articles. Study articles can concentrate on interpretations of historical manuals, use of particular weapons or devices in combat, through to the study of gentle behaviour and the Rapier fighter.

For those who don't know me, I am the second person appointed Lord Guildmaster (succeeding Master Arenwald von Hagenburg), being originally created Ancient Guildmaster when the guild was first proclaimed. Previously, I had been strongly involved in the setting up of Rapier in Lochac along with Ancient Guildmaster Edmund the Lame, and was the first Principality Rapier Marshal of Lochac in the early 1990's. I specialise in Giacomo di'Grassi, but recently have moved to a more Sanct Didier style (well, I am French!).

To start the ball rolling, I am submitting my sword-length article to this issue. I hope to see it joined by plenty of other articles from my fellow Guild members.

Yours in Service
Francois Henri Guyon
Lord Guildmaster

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The Royal Guild of France Directory

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Drachenwald

Dameon Greybeard
Lochac (Politarchopolis)

Edmund the Lame (Paul Sawtell)
See Barony of Riverhaven Marshal

Sir Georg of Glacier's Edge
Oertha (Eskalya)

Jan Kees Dudel d'Ende (Josh Eisenberg)
See Principality of Mists Marshal

Brooke Racgozany
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Jose Ramirez de Coronado (Doug Coronado)
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Email: zspaniard@yahoo.com

Sorcha de Careman
Oertha (Eskalya)

Xeno of the Blade
Now in Ansteorra

Michael of Castle Keep (Michael Jacobos)
See Kingdom Marshal

Justin Dickson
Now in Ansteorra

Q&A with the West Kingdom Rapier Marshal

When I first embarked on Guild Newsletter I wanted to get a few words from the KRM. Realising that I had absolutely no idea who this guy is, the best way for me to get some answers was to ask a few questions. As Michael has agreed to this format, if you have any questions for Michael, please send them in and we'll get some answers for you. To kick things off I asked Michael a few questions about his background in fencing.

Q: When did you begin fencing ?

A: I started fencing in my youth at the age of 8 (1978). I progressed to several martial arts over the years concentrating on SCA Heavy, Tae Kwon Do, Kenjutsu and Rapier. I began fencing with steel swords in a western tradition in the SCA in 1987. I was still in Ansteorra (Houston, Texas) and had the immense benefit of being in the heart of SCA Rapier style combat. I was fortunate to know the old Dons and Dona's to one degree or another. I was authorised once I turned 18 (minimum age there). Since then I've won countless tourneys in the East Kingdom and at Inter-kingdom events like Pennsic. Highlights include becoming the Kings Rapier Champion of the East and winning all four tourneys at Pennsic the same year (AS XXIX).

Q: Why did you start fencing ?

A: I love blade work of all types. I love martial arts that focus on it and the history that surrounds it.

Q: When did you become KRM ?

A: I became West Kingdom Rapier Marshal on 2-28-00.

Q: Any particular areas of fencing in the West Kingdom you would like to work on ?

A: With some help from volunteers I'd like to get a Rapier manual written and a Marshals-in-Training program started.

Q: What are some of your aims and goals as KRM ?

A: In no particular order: To do my best to get things working successfully and fully integrated into the West Kingdom. To be successful we need to make this game we play in the SCA better for including rapier as an activity. I'd like to help create an environment that fosters the virtues of honour, courtesy, and chivalry both on and off the field. Have people understand that I'm only one man, and a flawed one at that, but that I'm doing my best to make as few mistakes as possible.

Q: Anything fencers in the WK can do to help ?

A: Volunteer! We need help with a lot of things right now as we build our infrastructure. This goes for the West in general and Lochac in particular as they focus on going Kingdom. There's something for everyone so don't be shy!

In Service to the Crown,
Michael of Castle Keep
Courtier to the Crown of the West

West Kingdom Rapier Marshal Directory

Kingdom Rapier Marshal

Michael of Castle Keep (Michael Jacobs)
835/355 N. Wolfe Rd. Sunnyvale, CA 94085
Ph: 0011 408-732-4903 Email: mikej@netmagic.net

Principality of Cynagua (Northen Central California) Rapier Marshals

Cynagua Principality Rapier Marshal
Fergus (Sean Kiernan)
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Principality of the Mists (Bay Area) Rapier Marshals

Mists Principality Rapier Marshal
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Principality of Oertha Rapier Marshals

Oertha Principality Rapier Marshal
Katherine
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Principality of Lochac (Australia) Rapier Marshals

Lochac Principality Rapier Marshal
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From the Cynagua Principality Rapier Marshal

Greetings,

As the new Cynagua PRM I thought many of you would like to know something about me. I was introduced to period fencing in June of 1998 at a renaissance faire in Reno and immediately started attending classes in Carson City. Under the tutelage of now Guild Master Brooke Racqozani and Guild Master Justin Dickson I achieved the rank of Free Scholar with all weapon forms in December 1998. In May 1999, I successfully played the prize for Journeyman and was promoted to Provost in March last year. I am also warranted as a Marshal in charge and am able to commission Journeymen. I've been a member of the SCA since September 1999. Other activities I have explored are: learning to speak Irish Gaelic, period cooking, garb construction, weapon making, armour making, leather working, jewelry making and storytelling. My family and I have been members of House Darkclaw, Pillar of the Kingdom of the West since May of 1999. I've been assisting Guild Master Justin Dickson with the teaching of his SCA period rapier combat class in Carson City since October 1999 and I began teaching the class of 10-15 students full time in September last year. I also teach a class on Elizabethan swordplay at Western Nevada Community College. If you have any questions on SCA rapier combat in the Principality of Cynagua, please drop me line.

Yours in Service,

Fergus

From the Lochac Rapier Marshal

Greetings,

As I'm the immediate superior for marshals in Lochac and most of you probably don't know me, let me introduce myself. I joined the SCA in Dismal Fogs in 1991. I've held various offices for the Shire, starting with Herald for 6 1/2 years, then Chronicler for 2 1/2 years and Seneschal for about 10 months before life took hold, mainly work becoming very hectic and I was travelling a long way to and from work each day. I've since moved to Sydney, which puts me into the Barony of Rowany, and much closer to work. As for rapier, I've been training with the people in Rowany since August 1998, when I was still living in Dismal Fogs. Primarily, I've been training under Peter Linich, Maestro di Scherma, which has been extremely useful in developing my skills. I'm a Provost in the Royal Guild of Defence, and am currently working with the other provosts in Rowany to establish a regular Guild training session as part of our Monday Night Practices. I took over the office of PRM from Viktor Zagreb, when he moved back to the US. I was his drop-dead deputy. Outside of the SCA, I'm involved with the NVG, and have been their National Secretary for a year and Training Officer for Mountains Garrison for 3 years. This explains why I know a lot of stuff about training people to use a sword. If you have any questions or would like to know more about fencing in Lochac, please feel free to contact me. The best thing to do is write. I much prefer letters and email to telephone calls.

Yours in service,

Táiriq ibn Jelal ibn Ziyadatallah al-Naysábúrí

Upcoming Events

None listed thus far. If you are running rapier at an event or know someone who is, send the event details in. In particular it would be great to list what sort of tourney you plan to run, who the marshal-in-charge will be, whether you need extra marshals for the tourney or for authorisations.

Upcoming Prizes

If you plan to play your Guild Prize at an event, let us know. That way we can try and get as many guild people there as possible.

Recent Prizes

This is where we plan to list who has recently played their prize successfully. If someone has played a guild prize successfully and has been elevated to the next rank, let us know so we can share the news.

Duelling stories of the 16th Century From the French of Brantome

by George H Powell (AH Bullen 1904)

These stories are my paraphrasing of his paraphrasing of Brantome. They are various strange true tales of duels that were fought in the 16thC, showing the rules and customs.
- Silfren the Singer

des Guerres and de Fendilles

When Henry II came to the throne of France, there as a duel fought at Sedan between the Baron des Guerres and the Lord de Fendilles over a great insult de Fendilles had offered to the Baron.

The young Fendilles refused to enter the ring to face his older opponent until a gallows had been erected as he was determined to follow the old custom and "do as he willed" with his conquered foe.

Both parties wore armour, and des Guerres as wronged party had chosen the short thick "bastard sword" as weapon. de Fendilles objected as it wasn't the weapon of a gentleman, but des Guerres maintained that those warlike people, the Swiss, used no other.

So they fought. At the first pass, the Baron was hit so that his thigh was torn right open, and feeling faint from loss of blood he tried his skill as a wrestler and closed with his opponent, bearing him to the ground. Neither now had a sword, the Baron was uppermost, using his fists and hands all he could, but getting weak from loss of blood.

Suddenly a scaffold bearing many ladies who were watching the fight collapsed! The cries were great and the people didn't know whether to go and rescue the ladies or watch the fight...

The Baron's partisans took shameful and unlawful advantage of the commotion to call to him to "throw some sand!" and he had just enough strength left to throw sand and gravel into his opponent's eyes and mouth and so defeat him.

des Guerres's men claimed the victory, and the Baron said he'd hang and burn Fendilles as Fendilles would have done to him. But the young man's supporters claimed they had heard no call of surrender!

The dispute was put to the judgement of M. de Buillion who decided the affair would go no further.

In any case, Proclamation 542 being duplicated for you here, I hope to hear the last of these rumours about thirty-six inch blade lengths for Elizabethan swords.³

Francois Henri Guyon.

Footnotes:

1: Sunday Mail (Queensland, Australia), July 5, 1998. "Cut down to size", by Warren Nunn

2: "Methods and Practice of Elizabethan Swordplay" by Craig Turner, Tony Soper, Joseph Papp (Designer), Southern Illinois Univ Pr (Trd); ISBN: 0809315629

3: ROTFLMAO
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Naysábúrí Rapier Blades Construction Guide

Instructions for constructing munitions grade fibreglass rapiers
By Táriq ibn Jelal ibn Ziyadatallah al-Naysábúrí (Richard Cullinan)

Introduction

These blades are based on the techniques developed by Edmund the lame (Paul Sawtell). (His design is Appendix V-A of the West Kingdom Rapier Rules) Due to my preference for a more edge defined blade than Edmund's triangular cross section, the design here is a slightly modified version to give a diamond section blade. I also encountered problems with the tips being far too fragile, and hence use a thicker rod for the tips. Once these tips are firmly taped, the blade will flex through the whole end section, unlike Edmund's design, where only the tip rods themselves flex. There's no real advantage in either system; it's just my particular preference in how they feel. If I can feel the blade bending I don't push as hard, which may have contributed to the high failure rate.

I also tried to achieve a period feel for the weapons, so the design gives a sword that balances around 23% of the total length, measured from the hilt. This is similar to period rapiers in the way they balance. If you're interested in the dimensions of period weapons, have a look at Gregory Stauf's article.

Oh, I'm in Australia, so for all you US people you'll have to convert the measurements from Metric to Imperial. Basically, all you have to remember is 1 inch = 25.4 mm or 2.54 cm.

Materials

- 6.25 mm (diameter) fibreglass rod
- 4.1 mm (diameter) fibreglass rod
- 6 mm internal diameter rubber stopper
- Fibreglass tape
- Vinyl tape - silver /grey and coloured
- Sandpaper, medium to fine grade
- Hot melt glue
- 19 mm copper pipe, cut to 13 cm lengths
- Epoxy glue eg Araldite
- Epoxy putty eg Selley's Knead-It
- Pommel weight

The length of a sword was limited to "one yard and half-a-quarter of the blade". Without knowing specifically how this term was meant to be interpreted by Elizabeth's Magistrates and Officers, we can not be sure how long this is. The use of the word 'and' indicates that it was over one yard by something called 'half-a-quarter'. My interpretation is that it meant an additional half-a-quarter yard. This gives us a blade length of 1, 1/8 yards, or 40.5 Inches.

Daggers are limited to 12 inches in the blade. Which is still a considerably fearsome dagger. I would presume that this large length takes into account specialised knives and daggers used for special professions. A good cook's knife of the period approaches that length. Much bigger than this length gives the weapon the qualities of a seax (or falchion) – a rather lethal weapon that authorities might not want people carrying around all the time.

Points on bucklers are apparently so common that they are regulated to a maximum length. The Wallace collection in London has some beautiful examples of such bucklers which have points of this or greater length. They generally seem to be a barbed pike head with a four-sided point. Such a point opens a nasty wound in the body, which does not naturally close again (similar to the French 3 sided bayonets of world war one). As recreators of the ancient art of Rapier fighting, we should be seriously looking at ways to allow buckler clashes and strikes.

The final parts are concerned with the enforcement of the proclamation items. Hosiers, being seen as pernicious offenders, are required to put up a bond in order to continue trading. In effect, I suspect, this became a matter of a fine before the event. Cutlers, Haberdashers, and Fencing Masters were not required to be bound in monies.

As has been noted by Turner and Soper², the length of a rapier was held to give definite advantage. There are cases cited of people seeking to purchase longer weapons before a duel in order to gain advantage over their opponent. It would seem that one effect of this proclamation would be to curb this activity (although I cannot see people organising duels for the middle of London city...). It could also be seen as a way of the monarch making a strong stand on matters that might be seen to be anti-English. Certainly when viewing this proclamation in concert with George Silver's comments in Paradoxes, I suggest that conservative members of early Elizabethan society would regard the shorter cut & thrust sword with favour, and the longer Tucks as "Un-English".

This proclamation appears to be the only one made by Elizabeth on weapons length. There are a full volume and a half collection of proclamations that she made on other matters (price of bread, wages, and so forth). It was also made early on in her career as Queen. Both of these points speak for the "Strong and Decisive Queen taking a strong stand" reason for weapons portion of the proclamation. Certainly other sources on Elizabeth's life indicate that she was eager to consolidate her position on the throne, and to be seen as every bit the ruler that her father, Henry VIII, was.

Notes:

Fibreglass rod is available from plastic/fibreglass manufacturers or from kite supply shops or from sailing supply stores but these are more expensive (retail vs wholesale). We're fortunate in Sydney in that we have a company who manufactures pultruded fibreglass rod, which are used for sail battens. They also cut to size, so we don't have to muck about with hacksaws etc to cut it.

I use soft rubber stoppers designed for chair legs. These are available from local hardware stores. A slightly larger internal diameter is OK. Make sure you get the smooth face ones (either flat or domed), some have a raised ring that acts like a percussion point when they hit, decidedly unpleasant. (Think hollow point bullets.) The dome-faced stoppers appear to last longer than the flat-faced stoppers.

Fibreglass tape is a plastic tape impregnated with fibreglass strands. Available at some hardware stores as a packing tape, or in good stationery supply stores, like Penfold's. Comes in two basic widths, approximately 6 cm and 2 cm wide. The 2 cm stuff is really useful for initial taping / binding, and the wide stuff is what I use for covering and finishing the binding.

Vinyl tape is readily available here in hardware stores etc. The silver / grey tape is usually sold as vinyl duct tape (I'm told this is VERY different to US duct tape) and is about 6 cm wide. The coloured stuff is sold as electrical tap, and is about 2cm wide.

Epoxy putty (ie Selley's Knead-it) is a two part putty sold here for moulding repairs in woodwork and other various areas. I've found it extremely useful as it can be carved / shaped once hard, and binds extremely well. This makes an excellent cavity filler. If you use the hilt construction I've given, be prepared to just cut off any section you've used the putty on, it's extremely difficult to remove from fibreglass rod.

For the pommel weight I use a cast bronze curtain rod finial, to fit 19 mm rod. They just happen to be the correct size for a counter-weight for fibreglass swords.

Equipment

- Hacksaw with fine tooth blade
- Pliers
- Vice
- Hot glue gun
- Craft knife or scissors

Safety Instructions

If you are going to be cutting and finishing fibreglass then you need to use adequate eye, respiratory and skin protection while doing so. You will be generating a very fine fibreglass powder that you do not want to inhale or get in your eyes. Keeping it away

The third part contains the new laws made by Elizabeth. In summary, these are;
Regulations on the making of hose,
Regulation of Fencing schools,
Regulation of blade lengths, and
Directions for enforcing the regulations.

The second and third items are of most interest to us. The details are contained in two long paragraphs making up less than a page of detail. The previous regulations take up over three pages.

Item, because it is daily seen what disorders do grow and are likely to increase in the realm by the increase of numbers of persons taking upon them to teach the multitude of the common people to play at all kind of weapons, and for that purpose set up schools, called schools of fence, in places inconvenient, tending to the great disorder of such people as properly ought to apply their labors and handiworks: therefore her majesty ordereth and commandeth that no teacher of fence shall keep any school or common place of resort in any place of the realm but within the liberties of some of the cities of the realm; where also they shall be obedient to such orders as the governors of the cities shall appoint to them for the better keeping of the peace, and for prohibition of resort of such people to the same schools as are not meet for that purpose, upon pain to be punished by the said governors according to their discretions.

My goodness, it's a zoning law!

Item, her majesty also ordereth and commandeth that no person shall wear any sword, rapier, or suchlike weapon that shall pass the length of one yard and half-a-quarter of the blade at the uttermost, nor any dagger above the length of 12 inches in blade at the most, nor any buckler with any point or pike above two inches in length. And if any cutler or other artifices shall sell, make, or keep in his house any sword, rapier, dagger, buckler, or suchlike contrary thereunto, the same to be imprisoned and to make fine at the Queen's majesty's pleasure, and the weapon to be forfeited; and if any such person shall offend a second time, then the same to be vanished from the place and town of his dwelling.

It is interesting that the term rapier is well known enough to be used in a royal proclamation published in 1566 in England. There is, still, some controversy about the origin of the word, and when and where it was used. The English Guild "Maisters of the Noble Science of Defence" were not teaching the rapier as a standard part of their curriculum at this stage. Senior Rocco Bonneti would not arrive in London for another three years. Yet the term appears popular enough to appear unqualified in a royal proclamation.

from your skin is also a very good idea. Even if all you are doing is taping the bare rod, I suggest you still wear disposable gloves, as it can irritate your skin very quickly.

Calculations

Following are the formulae I use for calculating rod lengths. These are essentially the same calculations Edmund uses, except they're adjusted for the longer tips used. I find the numbers for the calculations easier to remember in Imperial for some strange reason. So I don't have to recalculate all the time I made myself a ready reckoner to refer to.

R = total length of rapier in inches
A = R - 10"
B = R - 14"
C = R - 17"
D = 35.6 cm / 14"
E = 22 cm / 8.66"

For the calculations I always assume a 13 cm / 5" handle.

A = length for 6.25 mm rod. You need one of them
B = length for 4.1 mm side rods. You need two of them.
C = length for 4.1 mm top rods. You need one of them.
D = length for 3.5 mm tip rods. You need two of them.
E = length for 4.1 mm quillon rods. You need two of them.

Note: when I first wrote this in 1999 I was using 4.1 mm tip rods. I have since moved to 3.5 mm tip rods, as I'm finding that the 4.1 mm can tend to S bend and hit hard just before failure, but the 3.5 mm rods do not. It's not critical, just something to be aware of.

Blade Construction

Before commencing ensure that you have taken adequate safety precautions. Fibreglass dust and shavings is nasty stuff.

Cut your rods to the required lengths, as calculated above. A fine hacksaw blade is best for cutting the rod. Lightly sand the ends of each length to take the sharpness off the edges. This helps prevent the edge of the rod from cutting up your tape layers.

On a flat surface, butt your 6.25 mm rod (A) and the two 4.1 mm side rods (B) together. Bind together with short sections of your narrow fibreglass tape. Make sure the ends all line up at one end. I usually bind the two ends and the middle. The tape should not be right on the ends, but about 2 - 3 cm in from the end. Make sure the rods all lie flat on your bottom surface. Now glue the rods together using the hot glue, trying to keep the glue beads as even as possible. Try to avoid lumps, as this will make a wear point in your

Sir, Your Sword's too long!

By Francois Henry Guyon

My father sent me a clipping from the paper the other day. Entitled "Cut down to size"¹; it details some rapier demonstrations at the Royal Armouries in Leeds, England. It is a short six-paragraph article, which talks about Queen Elizabeth the first's decree on sword length. It claims that weapons were checked at the gates of the city of London and those exceeding a yard in length were broken. Hence (it says) the meaning of the phrase "Cut down to size".

Great story, great article. It's no wonder dad snipped it out and posted it to me. Pity that it is wrong.

When I started doing rapier in the SCA back in 1988, I was taught this same story about sword length. I may have been guilty of spreading it about myself. However, in researching hilt forms for illustrations in my earliest manual on sword construction I found that a number of swords depicted in books had blades that were longer than a yard, and longer by a lot. I decided to check out this ruling on blade length.

The great thing about buerocracies is that they hate to throw anything away. Unless they are trying to hide something, that is. By doing a bit of catalogue searching at the Australian National Library (telnet://ilms.nla.gov.au/), I found a collection of proclamations made by the rulers of England from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I.

Tudor Royal Proclamations (3 Volumes). Edited by Paul L Hughes and James F Larkin. Yale University Press, New-Haven and London, 1969. (ABNRID 63013965 //r97).

A "quick" scan through volume 2 ("The Later Tudors") gives the proclamation on page 278: 542. Enforcing Statues of Apparel [Greenwich, 12 February 1566, 8 Elizabeth I]. This is followed by a paragraph giving the details of the writ and its distribution and the costs of that distribution. Four Pounds, six Shillings, four pence was paid to the printers on 12 October to pay for 700 copies of the proclamation. It appears that it cost three pence to set up the type for the print on the 13th of February.

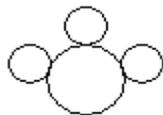
The first part concerns itself with pointing out how naughty people had become. The language used in the first paragraph makes it seem that these "Excesses of Apparel" were destroying the kingdom. The second paragraph lets people know that there will be no exceptions to the law.

The proclamation now divides itself into three further parts. The first is a re-issuing of certain clauses from a similar proclamation made in the 24th year of Henry VIII. The second is a re-issuing of a proclamation from the time of King Phillip and Queen Mary. Both of these parts concern themselves with the richness and make of people's clothing.

tape. Don't panic if you get them, you can always sand or trim it back later. You should end up with a rod cross section like this:



Turn your blade over and place the top 4.1 mm rod (C) on top of the 6.25 mm rod. I usually find I have a nice channel from the hot glue that the top rod sits in quite nicely. Bind the rod to your glued rods using some more of your narrow fibreglass tape. Make sure all the rods are flush at one end. Now hot glue the top rod in place, following the same precautions. Don't be too fussed with completely filling the gap with hot glue, you just need to stick the rods together. You should end up with a cross section that looks like this:



Now I usually wrap a strip of wide fibreglass tape around the forte section, stopping a centimetre or so just past where the top rod stops. Whether you spiral wrap, or do a longitudinal wrap is up to you, but my experience has been that a spiral wrap is overkill for taping this section.

Take your two 4.1 mm tip rods (D) bind them together at one end with narrow fibreglass tape. I usually wrap a strip around the end, and then another over the end to help prevent it punching through the rubber stopper. The loose ends are then bound to the 6.25 mm end of the forte, so that their ends butt up to the ends of the 4.1 mm side rods. Using the narrow fibreglass tape, bind in place with a strip at the end of the 6.25 mm rod, another about 2-3 cm from the ends of the tip rods, and lastly over the join area where the 4.1 mm rods all butt together. Make sure the tip section remains flat and in line with the edge of the blade (side rods). The tip section can now be wrapped with wide fibreglass tape. I've found this works best if you spiral wrap, as it makes the tip section and forte end one flexible unit, and reduces breakage of the tip rods.

Push the rubber stopper over the end of the tip rods. Take a strip of electrical tape and split it in half lengthwise. These strips are then taped over the rubber stopper in a cross pattern. The tape that runs down the side of the stopper is then bound down using 1 or 2 strips of electrical tape, which is wrapped around the side of the stopper.

Finally, wrap the blade with vinyl tape. Longitudinal wrapping is fine for this, but I've found it easier to do it in 2 or 3 sections. The vinyl tape should cover the bottom section of the electrical tape holding the rubber stopper in place. This really secures the stopper in place, and I've never had one come off. Some people also prefer to glue the stopper in place as well, but I've not found this necessary.

Your blade section is now complete. You can do all sorts of fancy things with it at this stage, but below is my usual hilding method.

Hilt Construction

The key to making a really good blade is having a very rigid handle section. The instructions here give a very rigid handle, that is relatively quick and simple to make. I'm hoping to have photos showing the process shortly, but until then you'll have to persevere with my written instructions.

Firstly, cut your copper pipe to the right length, and then cut two slots in one end, of about 2.5 cm in length. This should quarter the end of the pipe, but it works best if you have one pair of tabs slightly wider than the other. Bend the thinner tabs out to an angle of $\sim 45^\circ$. Lightly file the cut edges to remove burrs, sharp edges and corners.

Using a pair of pliers, squeeze the wider tabs so that they start to curl around a tighter diameter. These tabs will grip around the side rods of your blade. Once you've got the approximate shape, insert the blade and crimp the wide tabs so that they tightly grip the side rods. Be careful you do not crush the side rods. Once crimped, secure with a strip of narrow fibreglass tape. You should now have a supporting tab projecting from each side of your blade.

Take your quillon rods, and cover with a strip of fibreglass tape, as this helps prevent the rods being cut by your copper pipe during use. This is easiest if you lay out a strip the right length, adhesive side up, then line up your rod along the side of the tape and roll the rod over the tape, and the adhesive will cause it to wrap around the rod, without bubbling. Next tape both ends as you did for the blade tips, with narrow fibreglass tape. Slide the taped rods down the blade until it rests in the supporting tabs of the copper pipe. (If you are also trying to add a bell, you slide the rods and bell on as a unit. It's tricky, but persevere, and take your time to get it right.) Fold the supporting tabs over the rods to hold them in place. Secure the whole arrangement with a couple of lengths of narrow fibreglass tape. The tape should be in an X pattern over the cross section.

Cover the quillon lengths with some wide fibreglass tape, and then apply the rubber stoppers to the ends, and tape them on using the same taping method employed for the blade point. Finally, do a finishing taping with vinyl tape. I usually split the wide vinyl tape, to cross wrap the join section, and tape a strip over the quillons, securing the whole taping with a section of vinyl tape wrapped around the base of the blade, and wrapping a section of electrical tape around the top of the handle.

Prepare a blob of epoxy putty, and force this into the bottom of the handle, making sure the blade is centred inside the copper pipe. Clean off any excess and allow to set. Finally, glue the pommel weight onto the end of the handle with epoxy glue, and allow to set. Your new fibreglass rapier is now ready for use.