



Kingdom of Lochac
Royal Guild of Defence

Punta Dritta - January 2007

Contents

[From the Editor](#)

[Meeting of the Royal Guild of Defence](#)

[Prizes in the Kingdom of Lochac](#)

[Tips for Mobility](#)

[Rapier Training Guide](#)

[Subscription Information](#)

From the Editor

Welcome, Good Gentles, to the AS41 Twelfth Night issue of *Punta Dritta*. This issue is somewhat late, having been intended to appear in time for MidWinter last year. However, with various technical difficulties resolved, I hope to maintain a more regular schedule from hereon.

In this chronicle you will find the record of the Prizes since Festival and I wish to congratulate our newest Free Scholars, Journeymen and Provost. Let me also offer my congratulations to Guildmasters Caleb Adolphous and Angus Galbraith upon attaining entry to the Body of Guildmasters.

Also reported here are the outcomes of a meeting held at Rowany Festival that has resulted in some changes to the Guild Ordinances. I ask that you give these your attention.

The coming year is shaping up as an exciting time for the Guild. There are already Prizes foreshadowed for Canterbury Faire and the prospect of *three* Provost Prizes at Rowany Festival., plus a special Prize where Lord Guildmaster Don Dameon Greybeard will demonstrate his prowess on the tenth anniversary of his receiving the rank of Ancient Guildmaster.

The Guild is what we make of it, and I hope you will make the most of it this year.

Yours in Service

Provost Owain Cantor ap Hughe

Provost Secretary

Meeting of the Royal Guild of Defence

Provost Secretary Owain Cantor ap Hughe

A meeting of the Guild was held at Rowany Festival on Friday 14 April 2006. The meeting considered two matters concerning the Guild Ordinances, relating to the playing of Prizes and the responsibilities of Guild members.

Playing of Prizes

Ordinances previously stated

The sponsor for the candidate shall be responsible for informing the Lord Guildmaster, and the Provost Secretary of the results of the Prize, and providing a list of all those who presented as examiners. This notification must be delivered within 30 days of the Prize being played; otherwise the Playing of the Prize shall be declared unsuccessful by the Lord Guildmaster.

Provost Owain put forward the view that this wording was too restrictive, requiring the Lord Guildmaster to overturn a successful prize in the event of the sponsor failing to submit a report. The proper announcement and reporting of a Prize is an important part of ensuring the integrity of Prizes as a measure of ability, knowledge and skill within the Guild. It is essential that the Lord Guildmaster have the power to overrule a Prize result, should there be a finding that the Prize was not played according to the Ordinances. However, it would be unfair to a successful candidate to rob them of their newly earned rank simply on a technicality.

On discussion, the Ordinance was amended to:

The sponsor for the candidate shall be responsible for informing the Lord Guildmaster, and the Provost Secretary of the results of the Prize, and providing a list of all those who presented as examiners. This notification must be delivered within 30 days of the Prize being played; otherwise the Lord Guildmaster shall have the authority to declare the Playing of the Prize unsuccessful.

In the context of this discussion, the Lord Guildmaster has reminded all Provosts and

Guildmasters of their responsibility under the Ordinances to consult the Lord Guildmaster prior to the announcement of a Prize. Issues have previously arisen where a Prize has had to be modified because it has not met the requirements of the Guild. Prior consultation will enable these matters to be dealt with privately, avoiding inconvenience and embarrassment to the candidate, their sponsor and the Guild.

Responsibilities of Guild members

The Ordinances previously stated:

It is the responsibility of all members of the Guild to participate in the playing of one Prize per calendar year, either as candidate or examiner or sponsor. Members who do not meet this requirement will be asked by the Lord Guildmaster to show just cause, or to demonstrate other services they have provided to the Guild in the preceding year. Members who do not meet this minimum of activity shall have all privileges suspended, until such time the Lord Guildmaster is satisfied that the member once again fulfils his or her obligations to the Guild. The Body of Guildmasters reserves unto themselves the right to administer further sanctions, up to and including demotion in rank.

The Lord Guildmaster told the meeting that this Ordinance gave him little leeway in addressing the question of whether a member should be suspended because they were not active according to the Ordinances. The key issue here was the definition of activity in the Guild as participating in the playing of Prizes.

The Ordinance is important in encouraging the playing of Prizes; Guild members should take every opportunity to advance themselves where possible through playing a Prize, or to encourage the development of other fighters by sponsoring or examining candidates. However, service to the Guild is not limited to this activity, with many Guild members teaching or taking part in other activities not specified by the Ordinances. Some members may also be unable to take part in Prizes owing to injury or other commitments, and the Lord Guildmaster would not countenance these members being penalised.

The Lord Guildmaster proposed a revision of the Ordinance:

It is the responsibility of all members of the Guild to participate in the playing of one Prize per calendar year, either as candidate or examiner or sponsor. Members who do not meet this requirement may be asked by the Lord Guildmaster to show just cause, or to demonstrate other services they have provided to the Guild in the preceding year. Members who do not do so shall have all privileges suspended, until such time the Lord Guildmaster is satisfied that the member once again fulfils his or her obligations to the Guild. The Body of Guildmasters reserves unto itself the right to administer further

sanctions, up to and including demotion in rank, subject to the final decision of the Lord Guildmaster.

This allowed the Lord Guildmaster to exercise greater discretion in the application of suspension, left significant power in the hands of the Body of Guildmasters to determine sanctions, but provided an additional review in the form of final approval by the Lord Guildmaster.

The Lord Guildmaster proposed that the revised wording be open for comment until the end of Festival. No objections were reported by the end of Festival and the amended Ordinance was adopted.

[Back to top](#)

Reports on Prizes in the Kingdom of Lochac

TO ALL WHO PROFESS SKILL AT ARMS, BE IT KNOWN THAT

Rowany Festival

On Friday 14 April, Scholar Cecilia Lyon, sponsored by Guildmaster Don Ibn Jelal, did play her Free Scholar's Prize in the following weapons, viz Rapier. The candidate was examined by Free Scholars Mael Muire Ingen Alpen and Prospero di Luca Greco, and Journeymen Fionghuine MacConnich, William Forester de Blacwode and Hagen von Duernstein. The examiners agreed that the candidate had successfully played the Prize and did elevate her to the rank of Free Scholar.

On Friday 14 April, Free Scholar Giles Leabrook, sponsored by Guildmaster Don Henry Fox, did play his Journeyman's Prize in the following weapons, viz Rapier and Parrying Gauntlet, Rapier and Buckler and Rapier and Baton. The candidate was examined by Journeymen William Forester de Blacwode, Hagen von Duernstein, Gregory Tortouse de Sloleye, Tostig Atte Scelta, Fionghuine MacConnich and Emrys Tudor, Provosts Diccon Shorthand and Caleb Adolphous, and Guildmaster Don ibn Jelal. The examiners agreed that the candidate had successfully played the Prize and did elevate him to the rank of Journeyman.

On Friday 14 April, Scholar Benedict Stonhewer of Askerige, sponsored by Guildmaster Don ibn Jelal, did play his Journeyman's Prize in the following weapons, viz Rapier and Dagger, Rapier and Baton and Rapier and Cloak. The candidate was examined by Journeymen Fionghuine MacConnich, William Forester de Blacwode, Hagen von Duernstein, Gregory Tortouse de Sloleye, Tostig Atte Scelta and Emrys Tudor, and Guildmaster Don Henry Fox.

The examiners agreed that the candidate had successfully played the Prize and did elevate him to the rank of Journeyman.

On Friday 14 and Saturday 15 April, Free Scholar Prospero di Luca Greco, sponsored by Provost Dona Sabine d'Ricold da Forli, did play his Journeyman's Prize in the following weapons, viz Rapier, Rapier and Dagger and Polearm. The candidate was examined by Journeymen Emrys Tudor, William Forester de Blacwode, Tostig Atte Scelta, Fionghuine MacConnich, Gregory Tortouse de Sloleye and Miles de Colwell, Provost Caleb Adolphous, and Guildmasters Don Henry Fox and Don ibn Jelal. Following discussion, the examiners agreed that the candidate had successfully played the Prize and did elevate him to the rank of Journeyman.

On Sunday 16 April, Free Scholar Donncaadh Bailie, sponsored by Provost Dona Sabine d'Ricold da Forli, and in accordance with the Lord Guildmaster's decree, did play his Journeyman's Prize in the following weapons, viz Rapier and Parrying Gauntlet, Rapier and Dagger and Rapier and Buckler. The candidate was examined by Journeymen William Forester de Blacwode and Fionghuine MacConnich, Provost Diccon Shorthand, and Guildmasters Don Henry Fox, Don ibn Jelal and Don Francois Henri Guyon. During his third form, the candidate suffered a knee injury and was unable to continue. However, following discussion, the examiners agreed that the candidate had successfully played the Prize and did elevate him to the rank of Journeyman.

On Sunday 16 April, Journeyman Gregory Tortouse de Sloleye, sponsored by Guildmaster Don Dameon Greybeard, did play his Provost's Prize in the following weapons, viz Rapier, Rapier and Buckler, Rapier and Cloak, Case of Rapier and Rapier and Dagger. The candidate was examined by Provosts Diccon Shorthand and Owain Cantor ap Hughe, and Guildmasters Don ibn Jelal, Silfren the Singer, Don Henry Fox and Don Francois Henri Guyon. The examiners agreed that the candidate had most successfully played the Prize and did elevate him to the rank of Provost.

North of the Border Fest III

On Saturday 12 August, at the North of the Border Fest in River Haven, Provost Caleb Adolphous, sponsored by Lord Guildmaster Dameon Greybeard, and with the approval of the Body of Guildmasters, did play his Guildmaster's Prize in the following forms, viz, case of rapier; rapier and dagger; rapier and parrying gauntlet; rapier and buckler; rapier and cloak; rapier and baton; and rapier. The candidate was examined in each form by Guildmasters Silfren the Singer, Henry Fox, Tariq ibn Jelal and Edmund the Lame. At the conclusion of the forms, at the request of Their Excellencies the Baron and Baroness of River Haven, Provost Caleb faced Guildmaster Edmund in a final bout for the life of a hostage (played most ably by Provost Somerled of Redcliffe). The Guildmasters concluded that the candidate had most successfully played his Prize, and did raise Don Caleb Adolphous to the rank, privileges and

responsibilities of Guildmaster in the Royal Guild of Defence in Lochac.

Combined Guilds Event

On 16 September at the Combined Guilds Event in Politarchopolis, Scholar Adair McDermid, sponsored by Provost Owain Cantor ap Hughe, did play his Free Scholar's Prize in single rapier. The candidate was examined by Lord Guildmaster Don Dameon Greybeard, Guildmaster Don Henry Fox, Guildmaster Silfren the Singer, Guildmaster Don Francois Henri Guyon and Guildmaster Don ibn Jelal. The examiners did agree that the candidate had successfully played the Prize and, in the presence of Her Majesty Queen Asa, did raise him to the rank of Free Scholar.

November Crown

On Sunday 5 November at November Crown in Ynws Fawr, Scholar Cristina Antonia Cortes, sponsored by Provost Piers of Malmesbury, did play her Free Scholar's Prize in the following weapons, viz Rapier. The candidate was examined by Provosts Alessandro von Florenz, Somerled of Redcliffe, Grogory Tortous de Sloleye and Piers of Malmesbury. The examiners agreed that the candidate had successfully played the Prize and did elevate her to the rank of Free Scholar.

Rowany Yule

On Saturday 2 December at Rowany Yule, Provost Don Angus Galbraith, sponsored by Ancient Guildmaster Edmund the Lane, and with the accord of the Body of Guildmasters, did play his Master's Prize in the following forms: rapier; rapier and dagger; rapier and parrying gauntlet; rapier and baton; rapier and cloak; case of rapier; and rapier and buckler. The candidate was examined by Ancient Guildmaster Edmund the Lane, Ancient Guildmaster Don Dameon Greybeard, Guildmaster Don Henry Fox, Guildmaster Don ibn Jelal, Guildmaster Silfren the Singer and Guildmaster Don Caleb Adolphous. Following the playing of the Prize, the examiners did conduct an oral examination to ascertain the candidate's knowledge of the artes of defence. Following due consideration, the examiners did conclude that the candidate had played his Prize in most exemplary fashion and had demonstrated great depth in his knowledge of his chosen field. The examiners did agree that the candidate had most successfully played the Prize and did elevate him to the rank, privileges and responsibilities of Guildmaster. Guildmaster Don Angus Galbraith was accorded his Guildmaster's rank in the presence of Their Majesties Draco and Asa, Crown Princess Gudrun and Their Excellencies the Baron and Baroness of Rowany, receiving in token the black sash of his sponsor, Ancient Guildmaster Edmund.

On Sunday 3 December at Rowany Yule, Scholar Aegidius De Hammo, sponsored by Guildmaster Don Angus Galbraith, did play his Free Scholar's Prize in the following weapon, viz Rapier. The candidate was examined by Free Scholar Elizabeth, Ancient Guildmaster Edmund the Lamé, Guildmaster Don Henry Fox, Guildmaster Don ibn Jelal and Guildmaster Silfren the Singer. The examiners agreed that the candidate had successfully played the Prize and did elevate him to the rank of Free Scholar.

[Back to top](#)

LONG LIVE THE CROWN OF LOCHAC!

Movement Isn't Everything Ideas for Fencers with Mobility Issues

At the Guild Prizes at Rowany Festival, spectators would have seen Guildmaster Don Henry Fox examine candidates on the field while seated in a chair. Those candidates can attest to the challenge posed by fighting a seated opponent, and fighting from a chair is a beneficial option for a fencer with mobility problems. In this article, Don Henry discusses issues and tips for rapier practitioners with injuries or mobility problems.

One of the most trying things for a fencer is becoming less mobile than before. This can occur due to a range of factors; injury, sickness and operations being the most common reasons. The most important thing is that this is not the end. In a lot of cases it is possible to get back to where you were. This article is designed to give people in this position some ideas about how to get back fencing, especially after injury, illness or an operation.

The first questions that will be asked by the reader is: from what sort of authority is the author speaking; and how would they know what is going on in this situation? I have a medical condition called Fibromyalgia (FM), which is closely related to both arthritis and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS). I suffer from joint pain and immobility as part of my condition and I would be lying if I said that this does not affect my fencing. If anybody has seen me at Festival the effects of my particular condition are pretty obvious by about Sunday afternoon or Monday morning. From this point of view it is of interest to me to give people some ideas about how I deal with a lack of mobility.

What is also important is that I am not a qualified Occupational Therapist or other health care professional, though some of the ideas that I will present do come from people with such qualifications. Hopefully this article may give you some ideas about how you can get back to fencing.

Getting Back to Fencing

The first part of the process of getting back to fencing is deciding to do it in the first place. This needs to be a firm decision on the part of the person as it will require effort on their part, in much the same way as the first, and following lessons, took effort.

What you must understand is that it is not necessary to have a sword in your hand; there are much more gentle ways to start. One of the easiest ways is to watch others fence and see what you can see. This establishes the mind-game of fencing in its initial phase. See what comes back to you as you are watching. You may be surprised what you can see and actually remember. This is especially the case for those who have not fenced in a while.

The next part of the process is to actually think about fencing. From the movement of the sword to the movement of the feet, the actual thought processes are just as important as doing the actions. Find a notebook and write your thoughts down. Think of ways to practice and improve without requiring actual practice. That is the next part of the process, which takes the real effort.

Increasing Your Capacity to Fence

The first part of the physical element of fencing and returning to it is to understand your own limits. It is important that you are able to start within these limits, but also to stay active within your own capacity. You must increase this capacity steadily but slowly. Rushing the process will only hurt more and achieve less.

In the beginning it is best to rest frequently and to stop before you are too tired and or sore. It sounds like a bit of a cop-out but this is not the case. If you keep going until you are unable to move you will have a harder time getting back into it later.

With regard to work and rest, both are important. Work increases your capacity, but rest is essential to give your body time to recover, in order to be able to do more. This is especially the case during the times of activity. You must rest before becoming exhausted; short breaks are important during activity. These breaks will actually enable you to do more than attempting to push through.

It is important to be able to both test your limits and also increase them, but not at the expense of doing damage to yourself. Pain is the world's best indicator in letting you know when to stop. Ignoring this cue will lead to your detriment, but a fear of pain will also limit you. You need to strike a balance in your regard for pain. Somewhere between fear and disregard, there is respect and this is where the balance is found. If you become afraid of pain you will stagnate and will not improve, but also if you disregard pain you will cause yourself damage.

Fear → Respect ← Disregard

It is important that you exercise to the point of *fatigue* but before *pain* occurs. This is how the occupational therapists say it. You must consider the overall effect of what you are doing. Only by attempting more is it possible to increase your fitness, but this must be done through exercise and not pain. In my case, I would say that you should be aiming to increase your capacity by a factor of about 5 per cent and no more. Once the 5 per cent has been achieved ~ stop. You should only push yourself to this point and not further. This way you will increase your ability bit by bit. without the threat of doing damage to yourself.

Stress is important. It is necessary to stress the joint a little but not too much. Do those things that exercise but do not stress your joints. If something becomes too stressful ~ stop; know your own limits. Relaxation is also an important part of the process. This is vital for removing stress. What is also important is that you take as much time as you need to. There is no need to rush, it is better that you proceed slowly and steadily.

The Chair

One of the first places a fencer can start after a mobility problem is by fighting from a chair. This takes the stress off the legs. A fencer in such a situation should examine this option and see what they can/cannot do while seated in a chair. You may be surprised what you can do from a seated position.

Most of the handwork in fencing can be used/practiced while seated. This is because it does not rely upon the movement of the feet. Parries can be practiced along with most of the other blade usage. Obviously, lunges are not possible and neither are movements that require use of the feet or legs.

It is important that you use a chair or stool. Do not sit on the floor/ground. This will place too much stress on the legs, especially in the process of getting down and getting up. A chair is the best for back support, but a stool can be utilised. Use a chair where you can touch the ground comfortably and one without arms, as they will get in the way.

It is important to take pressure off the legs and feet by properly positioning your body on the chair. For the best practice, especially for later on, the position of your feet should be similar to your standing position. This will also orientate your body properly for fighting so that you will not have to learn a new position. You should think about the *advantages and disadvantages* of being seated. For the more advanced combatant, you should also consider the best combination of weapons.

What is really great is that from this position you can fight full speed, but this is only advised once you are comfortable with fighting from a chair. I have actually done this a couple of times

and it really does improve your hand work. Your distance and timing are also improved due to the reliance on a single distance that is available at maximum range. However, I strongly advise you to do some sparring bouts before going into any tournaments.

Next, Standing

The next part of the process is to stand up. This does not imply that you should be doing any sort of movement straight off. To begin with, practice what you can while in stance but without moving the feet or legs. You should remember that you should be in proper stance, as this may take some of the pressure off the knees.

Of course you should not try to adopt a low position, as this will stress the legs far too much. The hand movements that you were doing while seated can be repeated and practiced, along with those you couldn't due to the seated position. Once you are comfortable with standing and doing hand movements it is time to move on to moving the feet.

Start by practicing footwork slowly. At this point in time your focus is on technique more than speed, much as it would have been in your first lessons. Start with single steps and movements to start with and make sure that you can do them one at a time.

Repeat single steps until you are comfortable and can do them more quickly. Then move on to more complex movements. Any movement that causes you pain should be stopped immediately. This is one you will have to come back to later, or, if necessary abandon completely. Speed should only be a concern much later on, it is more important that you can do them. Remember ~ increasing the capacity to move is a slow process.

Once you are comfortable with simple movements in your footwork, it is time to integrate hand movements and slowly increase capacity on this level. Practice simple movements of the hand and foot; only once you are comfortable should you move on to more complex ones, or increase your speed.

Conclusion

The focus of this particular article has been increasing movement for those fencers with mobility issues. What is most important for all fencers is that the same ideas and same process apply for those with other joint issues. Remember to start slowly and work on increasing your capacity; do not try to rush in and do too much at once.

This whole process also applies to those who have been away from fencing for a long period. Ease yourself back into the motions of fencing. It is better that you take time, than rush the process and do yourself an injury. No one can be expected to be back at their full form at their first practice back after months of 'down-time'.

If you are having issues with joint pain or other forms of immobility, I advise you to speak to a health care professional before it gets any worse. They can help devise a program that will improve your quality of life and also, in the long run, improve your fencing at a base level. Take their advice to heart. If you have a specific condition, especially with your joints, it is more than likely that some fencer has had similar issues. Share your concerns and ideas about dealing with the issues.

It is my hope that this article will help some, give some ideas to others, and increase everybody's awareness of the importance of their joints. If you are having some sort of issue with your body, there is sure to be a trainer or another fencer who will be able to help you around it. Do not be afraid to ask for help. Remember, you only have one set of joints ~ look after them.

[Back to top](#)

Rapier Training Guide ~ Part I

By Provost Piers of Malmesbury

Requirements for authorisation in single rapier, per Lochac rules 5.2.6

- 1) Safe weapon usage
- 2) Basic advances, retreats, stance changes and lunges
- 3) Basic defence ~ parries by rapier and by offhand, proper use of distance and voids
- 4) Basic offence ~ ability to attack using thrust and cuts
- 5) Proper calibration of thrust and cuts, right and left handed.
- 6) Verbally demonstrate an understanding of the rules and conventions of Rapier combat in Lochac
- 7) Must fight from the ground, and fight someone who is grounded
- 8) Demonstrate knowledge of armour and weapon requirements
- 9) Able to respond properly to a hold

10) Demonstrate knowledge of the difference between offhand parries with and without a parrying gauntlet.

Introduction

The purpose of this outline is to provide the basic information needed to authorise in rapier in Lochac. It does not follow any particular school of thought. It does aim to provide a basis of information which will allow an easy transition to period styles, rather than having to learn a whole new way of doing things which is more likely to be the case if following more modern practice.

It was a benchmark several years ago that a person had four one-hour lessons as a minimum prior to authorising in single rapier. This proved to be achievable if a solid structure was imposed and the student learned quickly enough. There is no expectation or requirement for a trainee to complete this outline within four lessons. It is arranged such for the convenience of the trainer. Feel free to break it down further if required.

Many of the explanations and demonstrations will result in exaggerated motions. This is all right for training and even authorisation, as later refinement may be conducted while coaching (especially for any of the offhand authorisations).

Lesson 1:

Terminology of the weapon;

Pommel, the bit at the end of the grip that balances the blade.

Grip, the bit you hang on to.

Quillons, the bits that poke out the sides, may be straight or curved. Used to form an angle where an opposing blade may be safely held away from you.

Guard, the bit that protects your hand.

Ricasso, the first section of blade forward of the quillons where there is no edge. Safe for fingers.

Forte, the first half of the blade forward of the ricasso. The strongest, most rigid part of a blade.

Foible, the last half of the blade until just behind the tip. The weakest part of the blade, but the most flexible.

Tip, the pointy bit on the end.

True edge, the edge on the bottom, a 'forehand slice'.

False edge, the edge on top of the blade, a 'backhand'.

Purposes of Training;

SCA: To be safe

DiGrassi: Judgement and Force; what do I do, when do I do it, how close do I need to be for it to work, how much effort does it require? (Be safe)

Modern Fencing: acquire the ability to observe, and from informed observation, deduce and apply.

Safety;

At all times during training and on the field, activity must halt immediately a 'hold' call is made. The expected response is to take the weapon in your left hand by the ricasso, point behind (as if sheathed in the left hand). When the problem has been resolved, only the marshal in charge may give warning to the participants to be ready, at which point weapons may be returned to the position held before the hold was called. At the marshal's call of 'fence', 'allez' or 'lay on', the bout may resume.

Holding the weapon;

The basic grip for rapier is to hold the weapon firmly with thumb and forefinger, and firmly but gently with the remaining fingers. The 'V' between thumb and forefinger is where one quillon sits, with the forefinger looped forward of the other quillon and resting against the ricasso of the blade. The hand is oriented so the thumb is uppermost. This will present the weapon with quillons pointing up and down. The true edge is now facing down, the false edge is uppermost. This equates to the period Italian guard of *Terza* (third).

Stance;

Stand with feet apart, a distance equal to a normal pace. Point the right foot (if right handed) at the opponent. The left foot should be angled between 45 and 90 degrees to the left. Weight should be evenly distributed between the feet, back straight. A slight lean forward placing head

over the right knee is permissible (although DiGrassi says to lean backwards if at all. I think this creates poor balance making an attack slower). Slightly flex the knees to avoid locking them and preventing rapid movement. Right shoulder should be pointed toward opponent, chest facing approximately 45 to 60 degrees to the left. Left hand should be brought up as a ward, arm extended so that elbow is well clear of the body, and you have sufficient time to deflect an attack. Hand may be before the face, slightly wide of the chest, or around waist height (elbow high, deflecting with back of hand). This is referred to as the offensive stance. This is the only opening stance suggested by DiGrassi.

"And the body likewise ought with all diligence to be kept firm and stable, turned towards the enemy, rather with the right shoulder, than with the breast. And that because a man ought to make himself as small a mark to the enemy as possible. And if he be occasioned to bend his body any way, he must bend it rather backwards than forwards, to the end that it be far off from danger, considering the body can never greatly move itself any other way more than that and that same way the head may not move being a member of so great importance ... And because I cannot lay down a certain measure of motion, considering the difference between man and man, some being of great and some of little stature: for to some it is commodious to make his pace the length of an arm, and to other some half the length or more. Therefore I advertise every man in all his wards to frame a reasonable pace, in such sort that if he would step forward to strike, he lengthen or increase one foot, and if he would defend himself, he withdraw as much, without peril of falling."

The reverse of this, the defensive stance, places the parrying hand forward, left shoulder and left leg leading, sword held back in low ward (due to the extended range, there is little advantage and great disadvantage in using the broad or high ward in this stance). This stance is used by DiGrassi in the middle of an attack, not as an opening position. It is achieved in the same way, however, by a straight pace forward from the trailing foot.

G. Hale also recommends the same stance as DiGrassi, and admonishes to maintain a steady posture and not 'dazel' your opponent (move around, feint, wave the sword about) as you may open your defence doing this and invite attack.

"A good Guard. Is hee that lyeth with the right side as thinne as he can, towards his enemy, and the point no higher then the shoulder, trusting to your Rapier or Swords defence; for thereby your enemy hath litle roome to hit, and you the lesse to defend. And also a good guard discourageth the enemy to offend, and is ready alwayes to defend. He that dazels much never defends well: for if you offend when hee dazels, he can neyther certainly defend himselfe, nor offend you."

Swetnam recommended placing the feet with the offhand foot (left, usually) behind with the

toes pointing away (60 to 90 degrees away from your line of attack), with the other foot placed about a foot length away, with the heel of the foot pointed at the big toe of the trailing foot. This is almost a ballet stance, with the trailing foot largely behind the line of the leading foot, and quite close together. In practice, an arc of 45 to 90 degrees between the feet, with the leading foot pointing slightly to the right of the line of attack is still functional. It is also quite stable, with practice. A matter of personal preference.

"Keepe thy rapier hand so low as the pocket of thy hose at the armes end, without bowing the elbow joint, and keepe the hilt of thy dagger right with thy left cheeke, and the point something stooping towards the right shoulder, and beare him out stiff at the armes end, without bowing thine elbow joint likewise, and the point of thy Rapier two inches within the point of thy dagger, neither higher, not lower; but if the point of thy rapier be two or three inches short of touching thy dagger, it is not matter, but if they join it is good; likewise, keepe both your points so high as you may see your enemie clearly with both your eyes, betwixt your rapier and dagger, and bowing your head something toward the right shoulder, and your body bowing forwards, and both thy shoulders, the one so near thine enemie as the other, and the thombe of thy rapier hand, not upon thy rapier, according unto the usual fashion of the vulgar sort, but upon the naile of thy fore-finger, which will locke thine hand the stronger about the handle of thy rapier, and the heele of thy right foote should ioyne close to the middle ioynt of the great toe of thy left foote, according to this Picture, yet regard chiefly the words rather than the Picture.

Carrie the edge of thy rapier upward, and downward, for then thou shalt defend a blow upon the edge of thy rapier, by bearing thy rapier after the rule of the Backe-sword, for this is the strongest and surest carriage of him.

The best way to bring thy feete to a sure standing, both for defence and offence, is when thou dost practice with thy friend or companion; at first get thy backe to the wall, and let him that playeth with thee stand about twelve foote distance, and set thy left heele close to the wall, and thy right foote heele to the great ioynt of the left foote great toe, and when thou intendest to offend thy enemy, either with blow or thrust, then steppe forth with thy right foote, and hand together, but keepe thy left foote fast moored like an anchor, to plucke home thy body and thy right foote into his place and distance againe; use this fashion but three of foure times, and it will bring thee to a true standing with thy foote, and it will be as easie to thee as any other way; whereas if thou practice in a large roome without any stoppe to set thy foot against, then will thy foote be alwaies creeping away, so that although thou wouldest refraine the setting abroad of thy feet, yet thou canst not, especially if thou hast bee used to set them abroad heretofore."

(It takes him a while to say just about anything)

Distance

There are four distances in fencing. The first is when you are out of range, or at such a distance that your opponent needs to make an extended motion or series of steps to reach you. This is also known as *Fuori Misura* or 'out of measure'. The second is 'wide' also known as *Misura Larga*. This is when you can reach the opponent with a step thrust or lunge. The third is 'narrow' or *Misura Stretta* and is the distance at which you may thrust at your opponent without moving your feet. The fourth is when you are too close to bring the tip into play. It doesn't appear to have a period Italian term as at this distance they would most likely begin wrestling. For our purposes, this distance will only allow draw cuts. Trainers should encourage trainees to only use this distance in 'passes', rather than as a preferred fighting distance. The most dangerous periods in a fight are when you are transitioning from one distance to another.

At what distance should you begin the bout? The basic guard should be taken at a distance where you are confident that your opponent cannot reach you by simply stabbing forward. By being slightly out of the range of a direct thrust, when the enemy sword begins its motion you may assess the likely line of attack and void accordingly; there is no need to rush until their foot begins to move. It is this judgement of time (to complete a motion) and space (distances and relative positions) that allows the fighter to survive. By this, they gain the 'place' of their opponent, allowing them to safely counter attack. The fencer must be aware of distance, and not let their opponent get close enough to strike from guard (i.e., without moving their feet), for if they do so, the opponent will have gained their 'place' and be hard to defend against.

Wards or guards;

"Wards in weapons are such sites, positions or placings which withstand the enemy's blows, and are as a shield or safeguard against them."

DiGrassi

A guard or ward is where the sword is positioned such that it may offer defence from attack while still be in a position to attack should the situation allow. There are two groups of guards/wards listed here. The first are the three wards described by DiGrassi, and these are defined by the position of the sword relative to the body. The second group of wards/guards are generic period Italian terms originated by Agrippa in 1553, which are defined by the position of the hand.

Low Ward: Similar to modern 'tierce', or the 'third position'. Weapon is held low and close to the body, hand just above the hip and far enough forward to allow a lateral parry without the pommel interfering with the body. Blade is angled forward and up so that point is on opponent's centreline and aimed at their face. This both threatens and presents the smallest visual cue to the opponent.

This ward is the strongest defensive ward, but allows only the thrust as its quickest attack.

Broad Ward; from the same position, extend the arm out to the side to chest level, angling the blade in further toward the face. The hand should be palm down. From this ward, the blade cannot meet the centreline, and leaves your centreline open to attack.

This ward is weaker defensively than the low ward, but as it tends to invite a thrust, the weapon is ideally positioned for a strong lateral parry or beat. It is an aggressive ward, as it allows for a direct thrust at the face of your opponent, or slice or tip cut attacks to arms, legs or body.

High Ward; as for the broad ward, only with hand raised to head height or further, and with elbow more bent. The hand is in a 'thumb down' position. Blade may be able to engage centreline of your opponent and point at their face. It has the same weaknesses and advantages as the broad ward.

The four 'Italian' guards of Agrippa are:

Prima, which is any guard where the hand is in the 'thumb down' position. This is the natural position of the hand immediately after it has drawn the sword. It tends to produce a ward that results in the blade pointing down at the ground with the true edge uppermost. It is a strong offensive guard but considered weak defensively.

Seconda is reached by rotating the hand through 90⁰ so that the hand is now in a 'palm down' position. This also tends to produce high guard positions, but not so high as *prima*. It is a good guard for protecting your sword side against cuts and offers many opportunities for attack as it allows several changes of angle during a motion.

Terza is reached by another 90⁰ rotation to a 'knuckles down' or thumbs up position. The true edge is now facing down. This is a very strong position with good balance between offence and defence. It still is the basis of almost all opening guards in fencing.

Quarta is any guard with the hand in a palm up position, after another 90⁰ rotation from *terza*. This guard allows you to comfortably place your sword on the centreline between yourself and your opponent, allowing you to ward both sides equally well. It was also considered the ideal position from which to lunge.

(The lunge action may begin in *terza* but the hand is rotated into *quarta* during the attack as it will almost always gain the 'inside line' while also effectively deflecting away your opponent's sword.)

Counterguards

A counterguard is a minor adjustment of position made in response to the ward or guard adopted by your opponent. It basically involves moving your sword within the general position of the ward you have chosen so that the forte of your sword interrupts the 'line' of your opponent's sword, essentially increasing the protective merits of the ward you have selected while maintaining the offensive capacity it offers.

Thrust

The thrust is any action that involves landing the point of your sword on your opponent, including the lunge. It is the principal mode of attack in rapier. A thrust may be executed from any of DiGrassi's wards, or indeed from any of the Italian wards. It may be targeted at any exposed part of your opponent, including sword hand, leading foot or inside elbow as well as the more usual face or body. The ideal distance is such that at the completion of the motion the tip of your sword makes firm contact with the target, but has barely flexed the blade. Practicing the thrust and lunge to achieve accurate placement (tip control) and maintaining balance throughout the motion will lead to an increase in reach. This increase will impact on your 'distances' as discussed above. As we only fence to the touch and prohibit excess force (sufficient pressure to be felt by the recipient), any closer is a waste of range.

Voids

Voids are simply moving the body out of the line of your opponent's attack. They are the principal defensive action in period Italian swordplay. Some claim they are the primary defensive action for all rapier combat, but this is not born out by the manuals. Swetnam for one advocates parrying and fighting from position and only begins to explain voids as his third option. Saviolo doesn't really talk of voids so much as counter-attacks, and this is something which needs to be kept in mind; an effective void should not only move you out of the line of your enemy's attack, but also help you 'gain the place' of them. Saviolo's 'counter attacks' are voids married to aggressive counter actions.

DiGrassi's voids are probably the easiest and are quite effective. There are two basic actions, determined by which side your opponent is thrusting toward. If they are thrusting at your left side (on the inside line), and you are standing in the normal stance with right leg leading, by bringing your left foot up directly behind the right (left foot toes behind right heel) you should move your body slightly to the right and turn it further away from the line of attack and bring your sword up such that it is interposed between the line of attack and yourself (preventing your opponent from changing to a draw cut). While a 'slope pace' behind would accomplish the same, by drawing up the foot you gain some distance (measure) that allows you to step forward from the back (left) foot and step thrust at your enemy. The void motion not only takes you out of the line, but gains you ground.

If the enemy thrusts at your right (outside line) side, 'slope pace' the left foot forward to the left in a half pace such that your body is rotated toward the right and moves the enemy line toward the right, also allowing your sword to be interposed between yourself and the line of attack. From here you may thrust forward, adding range and impetus by making a short pace forward with the right foot.

"Therefore, when this thrust is given within, it must be beaten inwards with the edge of the Rapier, requiring the turn of the hand also inwards, and the compass of the hindfoot, so far towards the right side, as the hand goes towards the right side. And the enemy shall no sooner have delivered the thrust, and he found the sword, but he ought to turn his hand, and with a reverse to cut the enemy's face, carrying always his forefoot on that side where his hand goes. If the enemy's thrust come outwards, then it is necessary, that with the turn of his hand he beat it outwards with the edge of his sword increasing in the same instant one slope pace, by means whereof he delivers his body from hurt. And therewithall (increasing another straight pace, and delivering his thrust already prepared) he does most safely hurt the enemy."

Di Grassi

(Although voids may not be or need not be the main defensive action taken, I've come to the conclusion that teaching parries first only encourages people to fight from a static position. Teaching voids first will help develop an ability to remain mobile and to avoid having their swords 'bound' by the enemy.)

Exercises and Drills, lesson 1;

- 1) Practice stance (include distance, i.e.; range of attack)
- 2) Practice the step thrust and lunge from offensive high, low and broad wards, and from defensive low ward. Demonstrates range of weapon. Discuss and demonstrate 'calibration' or acceptable force.
- 3) Practice voids against single thrusts.
- 4) Explain and test the reaction to a 'hold' call.

This should fill an hour without problems! This will cover all simple wards and guards, counterwards, thrust attacks and basic voids. Lesson 2 will cover passes, parries recovery and cuts. Lesson 2 should also include a revision of lesson 1. Run them through it very quickly to make sure they have the idea and then spend 15 minutes doing it all left handed. They **MUST** be proficient left-handed.

Lesson 2:

Revise briefly what was covered in lesson 1. Repeat exercises using left hand only.

Parries.

A parry is a motion by the blade or off hand to engage your opponent's blade and deflect it off line so that it cannot contact you. There are four variants on the parry, hard and soft, lateral and circular. These are all modern terms, and in fact are a fairly modern concept, although the actions are present in period manuals. Any blocking or deflecting action undertaken which leaves you in a position from which you cannot make an offensive action is faulty.

A hard parry may also be called a 'beat' or 'detached parry'. A sharp motion to smack aside the attacking blade, and then recover your line to allow an attack of your own. This does not seem to be a popular action in period manuals, especially as it tends to 'stop' rather than deflect the other blade. An exception is a suggestion by DiGrassi and Swetnam that from the high ward you may beat down on your opponent's thrust and then cut with the false edge (chop down across your body, which implies a voiding step, then backhand your opponent over their sword, or step forward again with the left foot, roll the hand and slice with the true edge as you 'press' you opponent's blade aside).

If you wish to 'walk through' this to explain it to the trainee, it is laid out as follows:

The trainee is in broad ward or high ward. Their opponent thrusts slowly at their chest. The trainee brings the sword down or across to chop down on the attacking blade, at the same time bringing the left foot up behind their right foot. At the end of this move, they should be standing with their opponent to their right, their sword directly in front holding down their opponent's blade. From here they strike with the edge using a backhand or forehand motion, whichever is more comfortable.

A soft parry is an engaging parry where you bring your blade into gentle contact with the opponent's blade and push it aside or deflect it. In modern fencing it may be referred to as a 'parry by opposition'. It is the intent of this parry to maintain contact with the enemy's blade. This allows you to know where the blade is and so prevent it from cutting you. These parries require a much more precise knowledge of your sword than hard parries. The Italians referred to it as the 'advantage' of the sword. Basically it means having the greater leverage by the crossing point of the swords being closer to your grip than your opponent's (more 'forte'). A soft parry, combined with footwork, can offer many offensive options while maintaining knowledge of the position of your opponent's sword.

A lateral parry is a parry that moves in a straight line. The parry indicated above would be a

lateral parry as well as a hard parry or 'beat'.

A circular parry is one where your blade moves in an arc to carry away the other blade. Period manuals usually refer to circular parries in reference to offhand daggers rather than rapiers, but it at least demonstrates that they were familiar with the term.

How to Parry;

The parry is intended to deflect an attack, and while this may be safely done with the blade alone, there is advantage and opportunity to be gained in this motion to add safety and gain position (place). It is important that this be done in correct sequence to ensure maximum benefit.

In all motions, move the blade first, and in the shortest possible motion. Don't pull the hand back before striking, simply move it positively to where you want it to go.

When the blade has begun its travel, bring your left foot up behind the right a half pace. This may be a straight step (directly behind the right foot) or a slope pace (moving the left foot through an arc whereby it stays the same distance from the right foot, but moves through a distance of 90 degrees, thus turning the body) depending on whether you are parrying to the inside line or the outside line. The 'inside' line is when your opponent's sword is to the left of your sword, from your point of view. It is possible (in fact common) for both fencers to be facing inside. The outside line is the opposite, or to the right, assuming a right handed fencer.

As indicated in lesson 1, it has been proposed that voiding is the principal method of spoiling an enemy's attack in preference to parries. Also mentioned before is that this is not borne out by the period manuals. It is important to explain, however, that the actions are not mutually exclusive, nor even always separable when examining period methods. DiGrassi states that there are three manners by which you may deflect or spoil an attack. The first is by opposition with an object, interposing something between weapon and target (parry). The second manner is by 'stop hit' where you attack into the enemy's preparation, killing them before they may complete their move (or at least threatening to, and so forcing them to stop their attack or risk hurt). His final option was voiding. In his explanation of all three there is clearly a combination of actions that essentially states that none of these is effective alone. He declares a parry to be the most common and expeditious action, but says that most people step back from the attack, so while they may have saved themselves from hurt that time, they are now out of place and time, and so have lost the initiative. He advises that a parry should incorporate a forward motion (essentially a voiding pace) with the parrying motion and to parry in such a way as to allow for offensive action once the enemy's line is 'broken'.

DiGrassi's second defensive option, the stop hit, must be incorporated with a voiding step of some kind or you end up with a double kill, and his void is described as;

"The third manner of defense is, when the body voids out of the straight line towards this or that side, but this is seldom used alone and by itself, but rather accompanied with the opposing of the weapon, or with the second manner of defense aforesaid. If it be used alone, the manner is to slip the blow, and to strike the enemy in the same time that he is over reached in his blow."

DiGrassi

In other words, voids are best used as part of a parry or stop hit. The importance of this is to ensure the trainee understands that a parry is more effective if they move their feet!

Hand Parries

"I advise all to learn to break thrusts with the gloved left hand. But even without a glove, it is better to hazard a little hurt of the hand, and master the enemy's sword, than to give the enemy the advantage by parrying with your sword."

Saviolo

The position of the off hand should be such that it will cover the area from left knee to above your head on the left side. It may also deflect an attack upwards. Attacks directed below the left knee should be voided or parried with the blade. NEVER reach for a blade below knee level as this requires leaning forward and opens you up to a cut to the head or back. Blades may be grasped, however any motion of the blade will cut the hand and render it useless. A blade may not be 'trapped' nor can you grasp or grapple with the opponent, but by closing your fingers around the blade (forming a circle with thumb and index finger) you can control a blade without trapping it. You can still be cut, of course.

Attacks to the left side should be warded by a 'circular' parry with the hand. Attacks to the right side may be parried with a lateral hand parry pushing the blade further to the right (including a slope pace forward with the left foot and rotation of the body clockwise, will also void the line and leave your weapon clear), but the same may be achieved (and more safely) by parrying with the blade and passing off by continuing a soft parry with the hand and disengaging your blade to recover the attack, either over or under your left arm.

Examples:

A thrust at your face may be parried in a circular motion by the off hand, leaving you free to reply from low ward with a thrust to the belly, or you may parry with the blade, half straight pace and void, take the attacking blade with an open palm in your off hand to recover your blade, then slightly stepping in with your right foot (avoid body contact, but this interferes with

their offhand) and draw cut their neck or arm (unless they run backwards very fast, in which place you may get to use the point).

A thrust at your right (leading) shoulder may be hand parried (lateral motion) allowing a low line thrust in reply from low ward at the belly or;

Parry with the blade, make a circular pass behind with the left foot, pass off to the off hand to regain your blade, push their blade down and away to clear a line to attack over their arm with point or edge at their chest, neck or face.

Passes

So far all footwork has been with a single pace, with either the left foot or right foot left in position. Passes are motions that involve both feet. They should be performed 'resolutely' any time you are altering your 'measure'.

A simple pass is to have the trainee come on guard 'out of measure', in other words, unable to reach you. Have them take one full pace forward (with the left leg if they are right handed), then bring their right foot forward as a part of a lunge. The first pace brings them into the 'large measure' allowing a thrust if the right foot is extended. The 'line' may be altered by compassing the left foot out wide (so they step forward at about 45⁰) then lunging from the new position. (Note that this will put the student in a 'defensive stance' when they enter the range *Misura Larga*.)

A slightly more complex pass is to continue the action above. After the lunge continue the forward motion with a straight pace or slope (compassing) pace with the left foot. This may bring them closer or take them back out of range. The two combatants will have rotated through almost 180⁰.

Practice these passes employing different guards, parries, hand parries, voids and stop hits.

Cuts

Cuts may be performed with four parts of the blade, divided into tip and blade, false edge and true edge. Given the restriction on 'percussion' hits in SCA rapier it is easy to think that a cut (or 'draw cut') is simply when a thrust has missed its target and then been drawn back across a convenient part of your opponent (as bad as it sounds, don't knock it ~ it works!). In period, cuts were delivered by quite separate motions of the arm compared to thrusts, and these differences are certainly worth exploring.

Cuts were performed from all directions, and with both sides of the blade. The Italian term for a

forehand cut is a *mandritti* although it can also mean an 'onside' cut, or any cut which proceeds from right to left (assuming a right handed fencer). Cuts with the false edge, or any backhand cut, or any cut proceeding from left to right, may be called *riversi*.

Cuts were also classified according to delivery method. DiGrassi devotes a considerable space in his work to an explanation of the circular motions of the arm joints. Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of these motions is the key to successful cutting attacks.

The first is the 'gross motion' cut where all three joints, wrist, elbow and shoulder, power the chop. Similar to what heavy fighters do. This is a slow motion and brings the sword out of position, thus leaving you open for counter attack. Not to be done 'in measure', it can still be useful in the 'wrestling' measure as long as you have control of your opponent's weapon.

The ideal method for powering cuts from the shoulder is to lock the wrist and elbow in position. This keeps the sword 'on line' but still allows cutting motions (usually downwards or upwards). It is a bit linear, but is quite strong in defence.

The second cutting motion is where the shoulder is locked, and cuts are delivered using elbow and wrist. This was considered a risky motion, as it still allows the sword to move off line (so is defensively weak) and lacks the power of the shoulder cut. It is probably of more benefit to SCA fencers as we do not need (in fact, don't want) more power in our cuts, and it is faster than the shoulder strikes.

The third cut is where the shoulder and elbow are locked and the motion is derived entirely from the wrist. This was considered the ideal method as it keeps the sword in position to defend while allowing very fast cuts to be made. A favourite version was the *stramazzone*, which is a wrist cut in a circular motion.

This demonstrates another difficulty when interpreting period texts against modern fencing. The circular parry was not regarded as such (that is, a separate action) in period, but rather was integrated into a motion. While a slip pace and *stramazzone* do not suggest a parrying motion, there is no reason a parrying motion cannot be accomplished in the same motion. It may be that with the introduction of the foil as a very light training weapon, and a formalised, almost ritualistic, methodology applied, the art was broken down to its most basic concepts; defend first, then attack. This separation of action, especially reinforced by foil's demand to establish 'right of way' before you may counter attack, has left a legacy where certain motions such as parries are seen in isolation, not as an element of another act which achieves all aims (attack and defence) in a single motion.

It is important to convey that force restrictions also apply to cuts (sufficient to be felt is enough) and excessive force is not allowed. Whipping motions, sabre cuts and the like are forbidden. They do not constitute 'placing' a blade prior to cutting. Placement of the blade may be as

quick as may be managed without transmission of any percussive force.

Recovery is just about regaining your ward position safely after an unsuccessful attack. NEVER lose their blade while you are in range, or you'll be at risk. As they will likely have gained the inside line in parrying you, you will need to recover some control of your weapon if you are to safely recover. Not a specific topic, more a concept to be considered.

Exercises and Drills; Lesson 2

- 1) Practice draw cut and tip cut attacks from the different wards in both offensive and defensive stances, being mindful of calibration and control.
- 2) Practice hand parries and passing off from all stances. Remember footwork.
- 3) Practice passes, 'exploring measure'
- 4) Practice parries, incorporating voiding motions.

In the next issue of *Punta Dritta*, Lesson 3 will cover alternate grips, offline attacks, disengages, trades and parry-riposte motions. Lesson 4 will cover judgement and tempo, fighting from the ground and a grounded opponent, and parrying gauntlets.

[Back to top](#)

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Punta Dritta may be downloaded for free from www.sca.org.au/rapier/PD_index.htm.

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[Back to top](#)

[\[Rapier Home\]](#)

[\[Guild Home\]](#)

[\[Previous Issue\]](#)

[\[Punta Dritta Index\]](#)

[\[Next Issue\]](#)

[\[Site Map\]](#)

Created: 11 January 2007

Last Modified: 11 January 2007

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