

# Obituary

## JOAN MASON – 1928–2018

British Fencing is sad to announce the passing of Joan Mason who died at home at the end of June. Joan was well known and much loved in the fencing community where she dedicated an enormous amount of her time as a volunteer, particularly in the Southern Region. She was Secretary of the section for a remarkable 30 years until 1998 but was recognised for her long service to fencing with a British Fencing Award of Merit in 1979. She was further recognised by British Fencing with a bronze medal in 1989 which was followed by a silver medal in 2006.

Her funeral, which took place on 24 July was well attended including representatives from the local fencing community. British Fencing has received a number of tributes from members keen to share their memories, some of which follow.

### Rochelle Dazeley, says:

It is with a sad heart that I am writing something about this lovely lady. A lady who could be very stubborn and annoying but always very supportive and encouraging.

In fencing terms, she came late to the sport but threw herself in:

- She helped run Salle Eton from its early days, only retiring in her eighties. In 1985 the club hosted a junior foil event for around 300 youngsters from all over this country and Europe, which led to the formation of the Leon Paul Junior Series. She was also involved in setting up the Slough Open
- She was involved with the Southern Region for many years starting as Secretary then Chair and then President
- On a national level she spent many years on the Foil Committee. Joan was also one of the little group that always made refreshments when British Fencing hosted A grades and was still helping well into her 70s

Not only was Joan an excellent volunteer herself, she was very good at getting folk to volunteer to do something and once hooked, you mostly stayed!

She was always encouraging fencers, and supporters, to get involved and to excel at whatever they wanted to do.



**Joan Mason**

She especially believed in getting people to use opportunities for their development, not only as a fencer, but also referees and other voluntary roles.

When I set up the Development Days in the region she was very supportive, turning up to help when she could.

Harry Jones remembers her receiving the Ann Smith Award on two occasions and how proud she was of them as they were for 'Contribution to Youth Fencing'. She was also recognised by BF.

Joan also believed in the importance of enjoying being involved. The Bucks, Berks & Oxon's Christmas Team Foil Competition had been a serious competition for many years but then some Christmas spirit was introduced – out came the tinsel and the competition received a new lease of life. It is still very popular and continues bringing the fun element into fencing.

Joan was a wonderful support to my son and to many other young fencers who went on to represent their county in fencing. Not only did she help them, she encouraged them to give back to the sport in terms of their support to others around them.

Joan will be missed. There will not be another like her, but her legacy can be seen and carried on.

### Keith Smith says,

I was very sad to hear of the passing of Joan. She was one of fencing's unsung heroines who was fiercely loyal to fencing, extremely hard working in the Southern Region but also at National Level and who was always cheerful and calm.

I remember her running a splendid British Youth Championships in the Southern Region and of course the Slough Open. She was a great supporter of Youth Fencing and at every event would always come to say hello and ask how could she help.

Joan was very happy to give her views and argue them forcefully, but logically, honestly and always without any personal rancour, whatever the final outcome. She was of the generation of volunteers who would turn their hand to anything that was needed.

I always valued her dedication, hard work, her cheerful personality and friendship. During my time as an active referee, British Fencing Board member and then as President, I always knew that I could count on Joan.

### Allan Skipp says,

During the early 80's Joan was a pivotal member of the Slough Fencing Club, later to become Salle Eton and she had been a prime supporter of the club since Harry Porter had established fencing at Slough College in 1964 under the name of Salle 64.

After Harry's untimely death, Ken Pearson became coach and Joan provided secretarial support and continued to organise courses and competitions on behalf of the Southern region which she had done for many years.

I became coach at Slough Fencing Club after Ken left to become National Coach in South Africa and with Joan's support, we established the Slough Open fencing competition.

We also organised a number of children's competitions which attracted young fencers from France, Holland and Germany and this developed into the Leon Paul Series.

Joan had the ability to gather and encourage a group of volunteers to organise and run



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competitions, and she represented the Southern region on many committees for many years, both regional and national and I think it would be correct to say that fencing in the Southern Counties would have been much depleted without her energy and enthusiasm and she will be sadly missed.

## **Marilyn Wheelband says,**

I first met Joan when I moved to the Southern region in 1977 after I had graduated. She was a lovely woman who always put fencing and the Southern Region first.

She always came along to competitions to help run them and support the fencers. During the time that I organised our Senior Winton Cup team, she attended to cheer us on and meet all the fencers. She then attended the Region's meeting to put our ideas forward and help with the regions organisation.

I was on the Southern Region committee for many years along with Tony Finch and Simon Routh-Jones. We used to meet at Joan's house in Datchet to thrash out any problems, discuss policy and organise competitions. She was always welcoming with tea and biscuits.

When I started a family, she was interested in my girls and how they were growing up. Every time we met, she came over to chat and was genuinely interested in how you were doing. Joan will be greatly missed.

## **David Oakden says,**

My abiding memory of Joan was her welcome the first time I went to Salle Eton and little did I realise that it was to begin a long

association and involvement with the club and that I would count Joan as a good friend. Under her guidance as the chairman and with Harry Jones as coach, Salle Eton's adult and junior sessions were providing support and encouragement for competitive and social fencers to enable everyone to develop at a rate that suited them. Joan's influence always ensured a warm and friendly atmosphere within the club.

Joan was a remarkable lady in so many ways for her commitment and standing by her principles to develop and expand the club and the award of Clubmark was a fitting endorsement of her achievements. But seeing her in action with the youngsters, involving them in organising the sessions, encouraging good standards, refereeing their own matches and working together was Joan at her best. And it didn't stop at youngsters. Before I knew what she was about, as a social fencer, I became involved in the club, coaching, local competitions and enjoying a long association with fencing. They don't make them like Joan any more.

## **James Roberts says,**

I first met Joan when I was nearly 8. I went to Salle Eton because that's where my sister Sarah was fencing and I wanted to join in.

I remember Joan being very kind to the new fencers as well as being very supportive. She would always help get you ready or explain what was happening. As we became more experienced fencers she would push us more. Getting us into competition, making sure we were training properly etc. The quality of

fencers that came out of Eton during that time is testament to how well the club was managed through Joan and the committee and coach.

When I left college, she suggested I become a coach. The club supported me along the way with Joan providing opportunities for me to work in the club helping to run beginners' courses.

Later I became a full time coach at the club and still am. In the last few years we have had some major issues, one being losing our venue which we had been in for many years. Together, Joan and I managed to find the Singh Sabha Sports Centre where we fence now and to many of our fencers it's actually an improvement over the old Salle.

As Joan's health in general started to deteriorate she stood down from her long-standing position as Chairman of the club and we made her our Club President.

Without doubt, Joan held the club together through some very difficult times. Her dedication to Salle Eton was second to none. She would be there every Monday and Friday, taking the register, talking with the parents and assisting the new fencers. She had a very strong work ethic that she passed onto a lot of her fencers. The club and I will miss her greatly.

In her memory Salle Eton Fencing Club has already started a Development Program in her name, to help youngsters with what they may need to progress. We believe Joan would approve of the club giving back to its fencers and helping them in any way possible.

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