

Salle Eton has Celebrated 50 Years as a Club

By Rochelle Dazeley

In October 2014 Salle Eton celebrated 50 years as a club. A party was held attended by over 60 people, both current and retired members. During its 50 years the club has done some evolving. It worked with a few names, but now in its third home, it still has a couple of members who have been with the club for the entire 50 years and several for 20 plus years.

Back in 1963 Prof Harry Porter set up a fencing evening class at Slough College. In 1964 it was decided to change the class into a club, it rented space at Slough College and became Salle 64. They were the originators of the Slough Open, which became one of the biggest competitions in the south of England and still continues now as a 6 weapon event. Unfortunately, Harry Porter had an untimely death in the seventies and Ken Pearson took over as a coach.

At this time fencing was not considered a suitable sport for those under the age of 13. Ken Pearson had been the Assistant National Fencing Coach and got involved with Bob Anderson in a new concept of activity clubs at Butlins. Ken was sent to Butlins, Minehead, to run 6 weeks of fencing sessions for young school groups. Ken became enthusiastic about U12 fencing and, in response to a mum who lived close to him, he started Chalfont Fencing Club.

In 1978 Ken went to South Africa as National Coach and Allan Skipp, took over many of Ken's clubs. Allan is currently an England Fencing Director and still very much involved with fencing. As youngsters outgrew the Chalfont Club they were fed into the club at Slough College. Harry Jones (the current coach) had two young children, Ian and Karen,

who both started at Chalfont and went on to win NAGC and were selected for U20 and British student teams. Kristin Payne (who is still an active VET) had helped Ken at Chalfont with her two boys, Nick and Tom, and she organised a further club in High Wycombe, the Wycombe Cygnets. Other successful fencers from this time included Martin Laing, Jeremy Sampson, Eleanor Farrington, Stuart Crowgey, Adrian Griffin (also now back fencing). Fencers also filtered in, and continue to do so, from RGS High Wycombe and Dr Challoners.

In his time Ken had set up the Chalfont Cup, a team competition for the U12s. After he had gone Allan changed it to an individual foil competition for the U12s, starting in 1979. In the mid 80s a certain Raymond Paul brought his daughter to the youngsters competition and his wife Barbara was so impressed that she then organised a Leon Paul youth competition in London and the LPJS series was born in 1986. The Eton LPJS was the first club to join in the series, running large foil competitions for boys and girls in a range of age groups up to 2011.

Kristin Payne was manager for the British Girls U20 team and she had contact with various French clubs including La Riposte FC, in Chalon-sur-Saone and exchanges were arranged with their young fencers.

At this time Allan was coach at Eton College. In 1982 Eton, we believe, was the first school in the country outside of London to have a purpose created Salle with metal pistes and fixed score boxes. It was Allan who negotiated the club to be able to use the college facilities and the club was called Salle D'Esgrime Eton, known as 'Salle Eton'.

In 1988 Allan became Director of Coaching and Harry Jones took over as coach at Salle Eton and is still there. Harry's children, Ian and Karen were both very successful National and International epeeists.

During the years various coaches have come and helped including Jenny Douglas, Jacky Faulkner and Rob Turtle, with James Roberts as the current second coach. James joined the club as a 7yr old beginner, becoming a junior international sabreur and British medallist during his competitive phase.

Joan Mason, an original member, has done a sterling job over the years in keeping the club going; encouraging fencers, parents and partners to get involved not just with the club, but with the sport, and is still there as its President. David Oakden is another worthy of mention, he was a committee member for many years and, as Head Master of a local school, not only encouraged members, but enabled the club to run all year long using his school hall during the holidays.

Others who have succumbed to the volunteer call over the years (and stayed on for many years) have included Sandra Maxwell, Sarah Roberts and Milind Pradhan who have helped organise the Slough Open for years along with the Eton Leon Paul and been BB&O Committee members. Milind has been on the Southern Region Committee and is currently an England Director.

Until recently the club has seen fencers going on to achieve fantastic results at national levels and regularly representing their country: at all levels - Alistair Gerard and Tom Bennett: at cadet and junior level - Nicole Abdul, Rachel Gower, Esther Kulmey, Katie Perrott, Paul Dazeley, James Roberts.

In 2013 the club moved to Sri Guru Singh Sabha, know as the Falcon Sports Centre, in Slough, where it now operates on a Monday (mostly adults) and Friday (children) evening.



Group from the party, October 2014 - Allan Skipp, James Roberts, Joan Porter, Jacky Faulkner, Joan Mason, David Oakden and Harry Jones