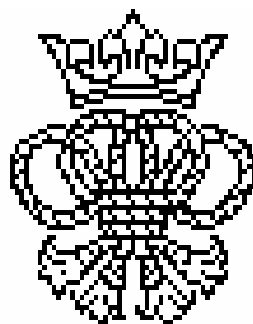


THE SEALED KNOT



SWORD HANDBOOK

2003

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to act as an introduction to the use of the sword as a weapon at Sealed Knot events.

The primary aim is to ensure the maximum degree of safety consistent with the production of historically convincing and entertaining displays. This aim sometimes conflicts with historical accuracy and entertainment but compromise is not possible; the emphasis must always be upon safety.

A sword must never be used in the belief that 'it will probably be all right'. If the user is not in control, the performance must stop - and stop safely.

This handbook is intended to help members become, or remain, safe, expert and entertaining users of swords. In the current safety-conscious environment, to ensure that the society continues to be able to use swords, it is important that there is a framework of rules and practice for sword usage which is safe, understandable, enforceable and simple.

Non-sword users who need to understand the way swords are used should also find this handbook useful and informative.

The aims of simulated sword combat

- To be as safe as possible, not only on the part of the user, but also with regard to opponents, fellow members and the audience.
- To demonstrate, as far as is safely possible, a realistic combat.
- To entertain and instruct the audience.
- To entertain the user and opponent.

Whatever other personal priorities may exist, safety must always come first.

The nature of combat

Winning a sword fight is not the most important part of sword combat; the most important part is not losing.

Weapon-based martial arts, such as fencing, started as training for combat but developed into sports with rules and formalised techniques which helped minimise the risk to participants. Theatrical or stage-fighting has evolved in a similar manner. In this style, safety is promoted by the use of pre-set, practised routines, followed exactly at every performance. At its best, a stage fight gives an accurate feel of combat without the risk but it has a very low degree of flexibility.

Safety can only be ensured by the skill of those involved, allied with attention to quality equipment, practice and training. The aim is to appear as much like real combat as is possible, while reducing the risk of injury to a minimum.

2 Historical use of swords

Role in battle

Except for the cavalry, swords were not a primary military weapon of the Civil Wars. They were however, widely carried and at least occasionally used in battle. For the Sealed Knot, they provide an opportunity for one-on-one combat which is a guaranteed crowd puller and a real demonstration of skill at arms.

There would have been three distinct groups of sword users at the time.

1. The 'gentleman', who was expected to carry a sword as part of his dress and who would have been trained to some extent in the necessary skills of swordsmanship.
2. The professional soldier and the horseman who would have been expert in the use of the weapon for its intended purpose rather than as an elegant dress accessory.
3. The common foot soldier issued with a sword was likely, as is known from contemporary accounts, to view it more as a useful implement for cutting firewood than as a valued weapon. Indeed the quality of swords issued to the foot may have made this their most productive contribution.

In the Sealed Knot however there is as much opportunity for the common soldier to demonstrate the skills of swordsmanship as the gentleman or professional soldier. A consistent form of combat is used rather than the different styles and techniques which training and experience would have created at the time. The weapons used are also consistent and are of a higher quality.

Other roles

Swords are also a valuable aid in education, entertainment and recruiting. The handling of a sword by members of the public with the realisation of its weight and balance can help bring the past to life and, perhaps, spark an interest in the period and the Society. The demonstration of different types of sword and the techniques and styles of fighting used can add greatly to the pleasure and interest of the visitor.

It is clearly important that swords that are shown to the public are in a safe condition and of a good and accurate standard.

3 The sword

Choosing a sword

The choice of sword is governed by a wide range of factors – such as availability and range of choice, the height, weight and strength of the individual, the role in which it is to be used, historical validity and, of course, cost. Some factors however are more important than others, and this should be recognised in making a choice.

The sword must conform to Sealed Knot regulations (see below). Particular care should be taken when purchasing from sources which may not be aware of the Society's regulations governing the design and construction of swords for the Sealed Knot battlefield. A number of mail order suppliers promise fully guaranteed and battle-worthy swords which may not be appropriate. Even the better suppliers who are not primarily suppliers to the Sealed Knot may have different ideas on appropriate weight, tip shape and other elements of design. In order to save wasted time, effort and expense it is a good idea to seek advice from an experienced user.

Homemade swords are very rarely found to be suitable for Sealed Knot use. Real weapons cannot usually be converted to meet the edge and point requirements, and 'tourist souvenir' style swords are likely to be unsuitable in almost every respect.

A sword that does not meet the Sealed Knot's regulations may not be used in either a battlefield situation or for training.

The sword should be well balanced, and suitable in length and weight for the user.

Period look and style

Swords should be appropriate for the period of the English Civil Wars (1642 – 1651). It is unlikely that many swords from the sixteenth century or earlier would have been in use at this time. Non-European swords would also have been uncommon. The type of sword used should be appropriate to the station and role of the character adopted in the Society. For example, a long rapier is not safe or appropriate for common soldiery in the type of field combat in which they are employed.

Seek advice on the most suitable type of blade and hilt from an experienced sword user.

Common sense must be the guide in choosing a sword. The user must be physically capable of handling the sword in a safe and controlled manner. If the sword test examiner is not satisfied in that regard then the candidate will be failed regardless of the cost and quality of the weapon. It must be remembered that the safety of fellow members is in the hands of the user.

Regulations for sword manufacture

All swords intended for combat use must have blades constructed from good quality high carbon (spring) steel. The use of EN45 or better is essential.

All blades must be properly hardened and tempered. It is particularly important that no welding, grinding or burning should be carried out on a tempered blade. Such work must be completed prior to hardening or tempering.

All blade edges must be rounded, to a minimum diameter of 2 mm. Blade tips should be rounded to a curve of not less than that of a 5p piece.

Tangs should be constructed with as much concern for strength as the blade. Reduction of cross section to pass through the hilt should be to the minimum

required, and should, where possible, be effected by curved reductions rather than right-angled steps as these tend to concentrate stress. Any decrease in width should be balanced by an increase in thickness. Welding on the pommel destroys the temper of the blade at its weakest point and is not a suitable technique for combat swords.

The minimum blade length for battlefield use is 50cm (20 inches), measured from the tip of the blade to the nearest face of the quillons.

Blades should be constructed with attention to weight and balance. Whilst it is important to meet the regulations, avoid over-engineering; the less the blade weighs consistent with adequate strength and bluntness, the lower will be the overall weapon weight. Such features as tapered blades and fullers greatly improve balance and reduce overall weight.

Hilts should be made with regard to safety; quillons should not be sharp or pointed.

Grips, which will vary according to hilt type, should be firm, allow for full control of the weapon, and be able to withstand the transmitted shock from contact with an opponent's blade.

Facsimile swords of the period - 'sharps' - are permitted for display purposes at living history or educational events only. They must never be used on the battlefield or for training. If an event promoter permits the public to handle swords, extremely close supervision must be exercised and children should never be allowed to have full control of such weapons.

Regulations relating to the use of swords

Members wishing to use a sword in a public performance must undertake the appropriate training and pass the appointed test conducted by an authorised sword inspector. Nobody, irrespective of rank, shall carry a sword on the battlefield without having passed a recognised sword test.

Users of other primary weapons (musket and pole-arms) must have passed the appropriate test in the use of that weapon before being allowed to carry and use a sword on the field. This particularly applies to trainee musketeers who may not use swords with dummy muskets.

Tied-in swords are not permitted, neither are swords intended to be used only for show by senior officers. If a general isn't safe with a sword he shouldn't be allowed to command an army!

No swords will be worn off camp except as part of an official parade, or while going directly to, or returning directly from training, an event or battle.

No daggers (i.e. blades of less than 20 inches in length) shall be worn, carried or used on the field, or in the campsite, except as a part of a living history display or an approved cameo. Daggers that have been used in an approved display on the field

must be removed before the battle begins. No cameo during a battle shall include daggers.

Swords must be carried in a scabbard, the only exception being the two-handed sword. Scabbards should be all leather. Metal chapes, crampettes and lockets are permitted however.

Swordsticks are illegal in all circumstances.

Safety

Sword users must develop a strong awareness of what is happening around them. It is each individual's responsibility to ensure that nobody on the field is injured by their sword. When the situation is confused or chaotic, the use of swords must stop.

Sword users must always remember that, blunt or not, swords can still kill or incapacitate. A sword must be used responsibly at all times

A cut aimed towards the head must never be landed.

Above all, common sense must be used – you should know when it's not safe to use a sword.

Sword blades must not be pushed into the ground on account of the risk of infection.

Thrusting with the sword is banned both on the battlefield situation and in training.

Gauntlets must be worn when using any sword.

Maintenance

Swords should be well maintained and blade edges kept free of burrs and notches which could tear clothing or skin.

Swords which show signs of damage or distortion must not be used.

4 Use of the sword

Basic sword use

It is not possible to learn sword usage solely from a handbook such as this. Correct use must be taught by instructors who are familiar with the techniques used in the Society and who work, with other members of the inspectorate, to ensure safe use of the sword. This handbook can, however, serve as an aide memoir for instruction which has already taken place and as a reference for others who, although not sword users themselves, need to know something of its use in the society.

Stance

The most common and useful basic stance is with the sword arm raised and slightly bent at wrist and elbow, the blade pointing at the safe angle* towards the opponent. The body should be relaxed with the leading foot forward pointing at the opponent, while the trailing foot remains at about 90 degrees to the line of attack, both knees slightly bent. This stance enables the fighter to move swiftly forwards or backwards, and at the same time to remain in balance.

This position may be varied depending on what primary weapon (i.e. a pole-arm or musket, etc) is carried and how it is to be used.

Adopting this position, with the point of the weapon level with the opponent's chest but pointing away from the opponent's body at a safe angle is to come 'On Guard' and can be used between bouts of action to maintain the fight situation; an aggressive pause and rest. It provides a controlled starting point for the next sequence of actions, a signal to an opponent of a readiness to continue the fight.

*The safe angle is one pointing, not directly towards the opponent's body but slightly to one side so that if pushed accidentally, contact will not be made with the point.

Basic Fives

The 'Basic Fives' are the foundation of all sword fights. They are a consistent routine intended to enable the user to attack and defend safely against opponents they have not fought before.

All blocks and attacks commence from the 'On Guard' position.

The first moves to be practised are the five blocks. These are always taught first for two reasons; firstly because it is more important to know how to avoid getting hurt than it is to hit someone; secondly to instil confidence. The ability to stop an opponent's hits should enable the user to relax and become more confident in the training. Blocking is normally done with the bottom third of the blade, nearest the hilt, this is the strongest and safest area, in comparison with the tip which will move too much under impact from an opponent's blade.

The five basic blocks

Block One		This is meant to protect the lower right hand side of the body from the waist downwards. The blade should be pointed downwards at right angles to the ground with the hand and arm thrust out and down from the shoulder, the hand at approximately waist level. If the blade is held too far forwards it will not protect the side of the leg, and if held too far to the right the opponent's weapon will miss it or deflect off into the legs.
<i>R leg Direction of blade</i>		
Block Two		Pivot the blade through 180 degrees and move the sword hand across the body, about waist height, so that the now upright sword is protecting the upper right side of the body.
<i>R arm Direction of blade</i>		

Block Three <i>Head</i> <i>Direction of blade</i>	The arm is raised above head height and the blade held parallel to the ground. If the blade is too low the head can be hit by an attacking weapon and if it is too high the attacking weapon could deflect off the sword into the face or miss it altogether.
Block Four <i>L arm</i> <i>Direction of blade</i>	Move the hand across the body at waist height so that the sword now protects the upper left side of the body.
Block Five <i>L leg</i> <i>Direction of blade</i>	Pivot the blade through 180 degrees to protect the lower left side of the body.

The five blocks must be practised thoroughly until they can be performed instinctively, quickly and smoothly.

The above numbered sequence can be varied in use.

The five basic cuts

On the field, the object is to 'kill' an opponent; to try and land a killing stroke in total control and without harm to the opponent (who should then proceed to 'die' as realistically as possible). This takes time and practice.

Cuts must be landed with the flat of the blade, not the edge.

Cut One	To the mid thigh of the right leg.
Cut Two	To the level of the right biceps, below shoulder height).
Cut Three*	Straight down and to one side of the head. <i>This cut must never be landed</i>
Cut Four	To the level of the left biceps, below shoulder height.
Cut Five	To the mid thigh of the left leg.

The above numbered sequence can be varied in use

*The head cut has been specified in this way because of the danger and imprecision of other target areas. It is emphasised that this cut requires sword users to:

- always guard against a head cut – never try and dodge or duck,
- always telegraph head cuts, allowing time for the block to be put in place and,
- always be in control and be able to stop the cut if a block is not in place.

Do not land blows which will impact upon the head (particularly the face) or the groin, under any circumstances.

Avoid hitting the joints, hands and feet as they can easily be damaged. What may seem a minor injury at the time can develop into something more serious at a later date.

Do not thrust in a battlefield situation or in training.

Stay on balance.

Learn how to 'pull' a blow or divert the energy of a cut.

Cut properly, do not swipe or flail.

The aim is to be able to deliver what looks like a full powered blow against an opponent in complete, controlled safety and to be able to stop or re-direct that blow if the opponent suddenly looks in danger of being injured, e.g. slips or moves into a dangerous position.

Give an opponent the consideration that is expected in return.

See Appendix One for target areas (the shaded areas on the diagram are prohibited zones).

Delivery of attacks

A well-delivered attack will give an opponent the opportunity to defend appropriately. The blow should be clearly 'telegraphed' by the attacker.

Telegraphing not only improves safety on the field it can also provide the public with a more enjoyable fight. The wider moves can look most impressive while the tendency to prolong the fight provides more enjoyment for both the combatants and the audience. There can be great satisfaction in seeing a properly telegraphed blow succeed in winning the fight.

Blade control

Whilst sword combat is generally a one-to-one affair, the potential exists to injure uninvolved bystanders. An impressive swing at an opponent can easily injure nearby comrades. The sword blade should always be in the user's area of vision. It is useful for the user to visualise standing in a doorway and to make sure that the tip of the blade always stays visible within that area.

Evasive movements

A very simple maxim is that if the target is not there - it cannot be hit.

5 Training

Regimental

All regiments should have at least one recognised sword trainer. Trainers should be up to date with the Society's requirements and regulations.

Training within regiments is done at times arranged to fit in with regimental requirements. If a regiment does not have a recognised trainer then the brigade should have one.

Sword schools

The Sword Inspectorate holds sword schools at all major and many mini musters, the time and day will be displayed at the main gate.

All sword users are encouraged to attend the sword schools before and after passing their sword tests.

Training does not end after passing the sword test but is a continuous process.

The sword test

Candidates should come to the test attired and equipped as they would normally appear on the battlefield. In addition, they should bring with them their Sealed Knot membership card. Where possible, they should be accompanied by their regimental or brigade sword trainer.

During the test the following will be examined:

- safety,
- basic principles,
- principles of defence,
- principles of offence,
- combination of moves,
- free fighting and,
- defence against polearms, muskets and horse.

For a detailed explanation of the test, please see Appendix 2

Assessment

The sword test is designed to ensure that users are safe on the field. Candidates will not be expected to 'win' a combat in order to satisfy the examiner but rather to prove the ability to meet the foregoing requirements.

The test will also include questions related to safety, usage and sword maintenance.

Candidates will be expected to parry thrusts from a pole-arm using semi-circular parries and push-aways.

Sword users who will be fighting encumbered by a primary weapon (musket or pole-arm) will be tested while carrying it. This particularly applies to musketeers who must have passed their musket test before undertaking a sword test.

The examiner will not be looking at the use of the primary weapon in attack but will be looking at its use in blocking and at the integrated handling of that weapon and the sword during combat.

Testing will take place during sword school at musters and at other times advertised on the information board at the main gate.

An example of the sword test evaluation sheet is included in this manual at Appendix 3.

6 Specialist uses

Cavalry

For the use of the sword in horse regiments please refer to the Cavalry Handbook. A separate test is required for the use of a sword on horseback. Horsemen serving on foot must have passed the normal sword test before using a sword.

Sharp weapons

Sharp swords and daggers may only be used at living history and educational events; they must not be left unsupervised or controlled by the public. They must not be used in a battlefield situation (including training).

Cameos and duels

Dagger and rapier and similar techniques such as cloak and sword may only be used in off-battlefield situations and in pre-rehearsed cameos that have been agreed by a sword inspector. Daggers must be removed from the field before the battle begins (see above).

7 The Sword Inspectorate

This is established under the authority of the Board of Safety to ensure the appropriate training and safe usage of swords within the Sealed Knot.

The Inspectorate consists of a chairman, committee and inspectors and meets regularly to discuss the use of swords in the Society. The inspectorate also consults manufacturers with regard to appropriate standards of manufacture and production. For a full list of inspectors please see Appendix 4.

Sword inspectors are responsible for:

- enforcing the regulations relating to swords,
- safety on the field,
- carrying out sword tests and,
- liaising with sword trainers.

Sword trainers are responsible for:

- the training and preparation of those wishing to take sword tests and,
- offering advice on equipment and usage.

The rules relating to sword usage will be enforced by the inspectorate and frequent safety inspections will be made. The inspectorate is committed to the maintenance of:

- safety,
- standards,
- the development of sword usage in the society and,
- that support and encouragement is given to sword users.

The Sword Inspectorate is also responsible for the issuing of sword cards for authority to use a sword on the battlefield and the revocation of that authority where deemed necessary.

8 Postscript

If there are any queries as to the content or meaning of anything in this handbook, please ask a member of the inspectorate. All sword users are encouraged to seek clarification on any areas where they are unsure.

Sealed Knot swordsmen are not Errol Flynn, Cyrano de Bergerac, Xena - Warrior Princess or any of the Three Musketeers!

If a 'hit' is seen and/or felt then it is a courtesy to one's opponent to 'die' or retire injured. To ignore it destroys the credibility of the performance, sets a bad example to others and can lead to argument.

The Sealed Knot is as much about enjoyment for its members as education and entertainment for the public. A relaxed but nonetheless safe attitude to sword combat will ensure that participation continues to be enjoyable for all.

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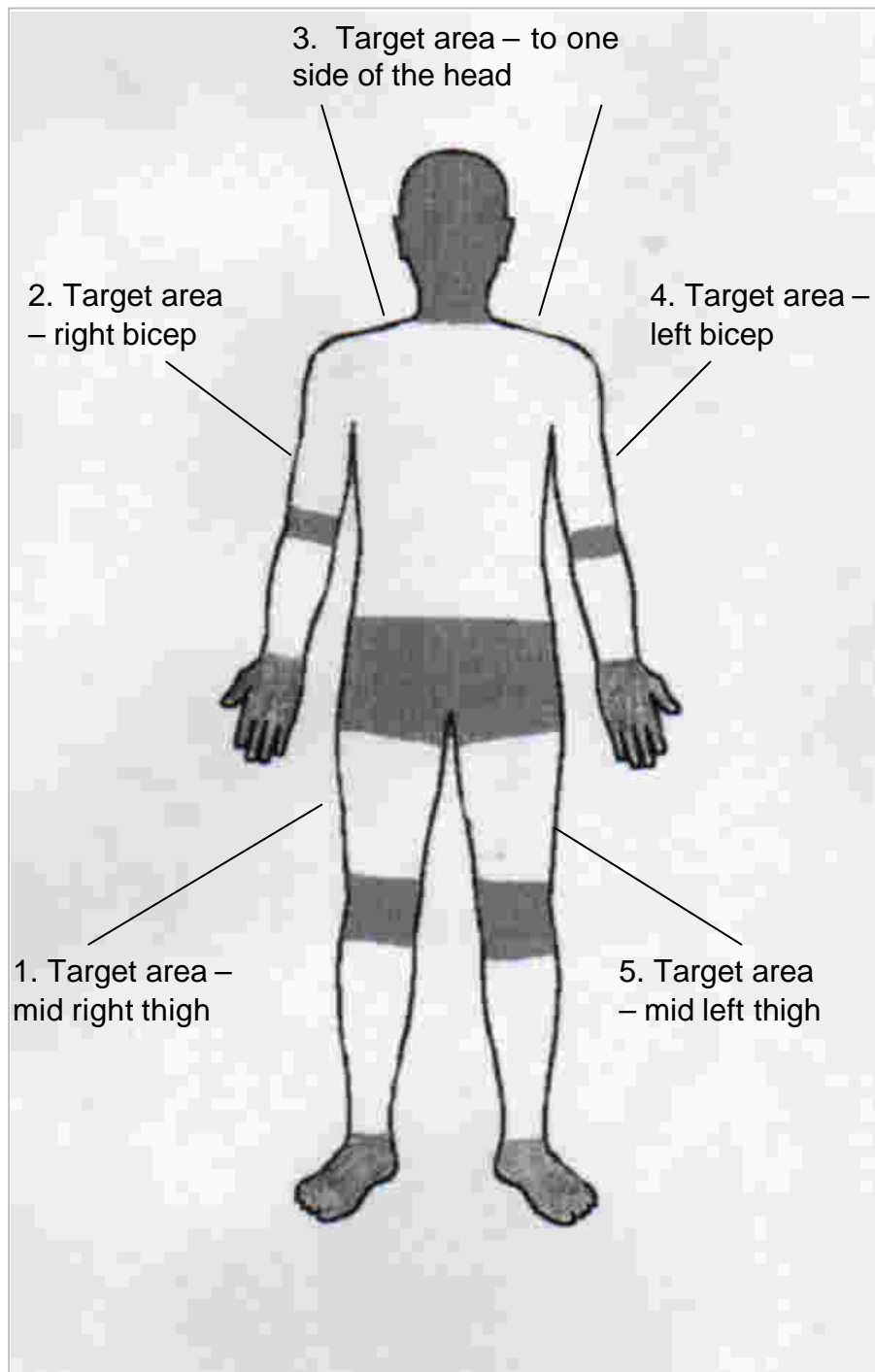
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* denotes a treatise published in English.

denotes a modern reprint (and/or translation) in progress.

Appendix 1

Target Areas (shaded areas are prohibited areas)



Appendix 2

Notes on the Systematic Teaching and Inspecting of Swordsmanship

Introduction

- Safety
 - ⇒ Sword care
 - ⇒ Safe handling
 - ⇒ Target areas
 - ⇒ Safety guidelines
 - ⇒ Situational Awareness
- Weapon types and uses.
 - ⇒ Back Sword
 - ⇒ Hanger
 - ⇒ Broad Sword
 - ⇒ Side sword
 - ⇒ Rapier

Basic Principles

- Balance
- Footwork
 - ⇒ Passing
 - ⇒ Stepping
 - ⇒ Traversing
- Principle of “Line”
- Eye contact
- Distance
 - ⇒ Measure
 - ⇒ Time
- Guards
 - ⇒ Establishing a safe “guard” position.

Principles of Defence

- ***Define basic parries***
 - ⇒ System of 5 parries, provide all round protection to all outside attacks.
 - ⇒ Explain mechanics of bent arm, absorb shock
 - ⇒ Explain risks of “punched” when parrying
- ***Execute single parries “around clock”***
 - ⇒ Instructor/inspector delivers single, clearly telegraphed blows, sequentially around student. Student defends using correct parries.
- ***Execute single parries, returning to “guard”***
 - ⇒ Instructor/inspector delivers single, random blows, starting in “guard” and returning to “guard” position between each blow.
 - ⇒ Student defends starting from “guard” and returning to “guard” after each blow.

- **Execute double parries, returning to “guard”**
 - ⇒ Instructor/inspector delivers two random blows, starting in “guard” and returning to “guard” position between each set of blows.
 - ⇒ Student defends starting from “guard” and returning to “guard” after each set of blows.
- **Execute triple parries, returning to “guard”**
 - ⇒ Instructor/inspector delivers three random blows, starting in “guard” and returning to “guard” position between each set of blows.
 - ⇒ Student defends starting from “guard” and returning to “guard” after each set of blows.

Principles of Offence

- **Define basic cuts**
 - ⇒ Body mechanics
“The sword leads and the body follows”
 - ⇒ Telegraphing blows
 - ⇒ Pulling blows
- **Execute single cuts “around clock”**
 - ⇒ Student delivers single, clearly telegraphed blows, sequentially around Instructor/Inspector.
 - ⇒ Instructor/Inspector defends using correct parries.
- **Execute single attacks, returning to “guard”**
 - ⇒ Student delivers single, random blows, starting in “guard” and returning to “guard” position between each blow.
 - ⇒ Instructor/inspector defends starting from “guard” and returning to “guard” after each blow.
- **Execute double attacks, returning to “guard”**
 - ⇒ Student delivers two random blows, starting in “guard” and returning to “guard” position between each set of blows.
 - ⇒ Instructor/inspector defends starting from “guard” and returning to “guard” after each set of blows.
- **Execute triple attacks, returning to “guard”**
 - ⇒ Student delivers three random blows, starting in “guard” and returning to “guard” position between each set of blows.
 - ⇒ Instructor/inspector defends starting from “guard” and returning to “guard” after each set of blows.
- **Landing of Blows**
 - ⇒ Demonstrate safe method of landing blade on opponent under control (excluding head)
 - ⇒ Instructor/Inspector allow student to land strikes against target areas (excluding head)
 - ⇒ Student delivers three blows to same target, Instructor/Inspector randomly chooses which to defend and which to leave.
 - ⇒ Student to safely land blow when Instructor/Inspector chooses not to parry.

Combinations

- Defend and Move Back
- Attack and Move Forwards
- Patterns
 - ⇒ S cuts
 - ⇒ Advantages and pitfalls of “patterns”

Free Fighting

- Ability to demonstrate safe and controlled Defences and Attacks whilst moving freely backwards and forwards,
- Demonstration of clear “situational awareness”

Defence against Pole-arms, Muskets and Horse

- Principles of defending against long arms and clubbed muskets
 - ⇒ Semi circular parries
 - ⇒ Voids and traverses

Appendix 3

Sealed Knot Sword Test Evaluation Sheet

Name:	Regiment:
Membership No:	Role:

	Pass/Fail ✓/✗
SK Membership card valid	
Sword in sound and clean condition	
Sword care	
Target areas	

Defence	Pass/Fail ✓/✗		Pass/Fail ✓/✗
Single parries round the clock		Eye contact	
Single random parries returning to guard		Distance	
Double random parries returning to guard		Safe guard	
Triple random parries returning to guard		Balance	
		Footwork	

Offence			
Single cuts around the clock		Eye contact	
Single random attacks returning to guard		Distance	
Double random attacks returning to guard		Safe guard	
Triple random attacks returning to guard		Balance	
		Footwork	

Free fighting/Other			
Situational awareness		Defence against Polearms/Musket	
Combinations		Landing of Blows	
Footwork		Defence against horse	
Balance			

Cavalry only			
Horse v horse		Horse v foot	

Tested by:	
Date:	
Signed:	
Candidates Signature:	

Appendix 4

The Sword Inspectorate - 2003

Lorraine Knaggs* (Chair &BoS rep)	Gordon's	Scot's Brigade
Kelvin Craig	O'Cahan's	Scot's Brigade
Jason Haggerty	Robartes	Western Association
Pete Knaggs (BoS rep)	Robartes	Western Association
Margaret Haggerty	Pickering's	Northern Association
Vaughan Price	Manchester's	Northern Association
Dan Hynds*	Waller's	Cavalry
Shane Keenan	Lucas'	Kings Tercio
Joe Aylett	Ruperts	Rupert's Tercio
Dave Wilton (Bonzo)	Hammond's	London Brigade
Matt Jones	Wentworths	Forlorn Hope
Helen Mather		Hopton's Tercio

* Can test cavalry and foot