

Iaido Bu Report 2017

Bucho: John Honisz-Greens
Event Officer: Anil Sahal
Grading Officer: Phil Henderson

Co-opted: **Cashier** – Hugh Darby; **Squad Manager** – Karl Gibbons; **Squad Coach** – Greg Drewe;
Assn Coach – Martin Clark; **Senior Advisor 1** – Dave Fanning;
Senior Advisor 2 – Billy Smart

Introduction

This last year has involved some steep learning curves for both me and the other new Bu officers. Despite the various challenges, I am pleased to report that the Bu has attracted a diverse group of officers who represent many different dojo and areas across the BKA, and that we are all working together to build on the work previous work done, while adding our own vision into the mix.

To date we have run five seminars; hitting the ground running with the 2016 Summer Seminar where we tried some new ideas, such as pre-planned teacher rotation to allow more variety, and 7th dan input sessions that were well received and vital as we believe that our seniors should also get support. From there we followed the usual pattern of the Northern, Spring, Scottish and West Midlands Seminars; however, we made some date changes to these first three seminars of the year to create what we believe is a better time-spacing between them. To date all seminars have been well attended with the four regional seminars attracting 230 attendances. We are hopeful for a good 2017 Summer Seminar attendance as well and bookings are already looking good. We are pleased to that we will be welcoming a superb Japanese delegation who are also being supported by 7th dan sensei from the UK, Europe and the USA, and it is an event that we are hosting the event in a truly incredible world-class venue.

We also set-up and delivered two successful Level 1 Coaching Courses in January and February, which are the quiet Iaido months. With the help of Martin Clark, Anna Stone and Hugh Darby sensei we could pass 48 new L1 coaches. We have repacked our Iaido Squad Training Sessions (STS): a full account of the rationale for this was given and is available on the BKA webpage for those who have not seen it: <http://www.britishkendoassociation.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Iaido-Squad-Training-Sessions-2017-QA.pdf>

The Squad Manager informs me that attendance at STS is high and that there are many new faces attending STS and fighting for team places. We have worked hard to make the STS locations as varied and representative as possible, but realise we still have work to do. We also realise that it will be impossible to please all members or all areas with our limited resources. We have discussed STS locations as a team and with the DRC Chair and will address this for next year. The Iaido Nationals this year were in Sheffield. It seems that our improved communication with the members about the one-day STS events and the benefits of attending regardless of squad ambitions; choosing to have them with more varied locations to encourage participation from our diverse membership; and combined with taking a leap of faith that having and the Nationals the furthest north they have ever been, resulted in perhaps the highest ever sign-up numbers for our Iaido Nationals, with 21 teams and over 70 individual participants.

We will also trial a new event using a very exciting but demanding format the day after the AGM. This should be very useful for developing any members' Iaido under pressure, which is obviously useful for both grading and competitive Iaido, but will also allow them to develop their own critical-eye and receive dedicated written feedback from one of the senior sensei on the day. To give benefits back to the Iaido members, this event is only £3, which is charged to help cover costs for refreshments on the day with Bu funds paying the other costs.

Regarding competitions, the Bu also sent an laido squad to the EIC in Budapest where we achieved bronze medal success. I am sure we would all like to congratulate the medal winners and offer our commiserations to the others, who will hopefully build on their experiences for the future. Thanks also go to the former Squad Manager for his efforts, and we welcomed back into the role Karl Gibbons as the new Squad Manager, with Greg Drewe sensei as Squad Coach, being assisted by Martin Clark sensei.

Our priorities moving forward are to be able to get our yearly calendar out to the membership as early as possible again, so it helps with your forward planning. We want to continue to find quality and affordable venues with the aim of using only wooden floors for laido seminars. We will continue to encourage the use of pre-seminar planning to enhance deliberate learning and to continue offering the opportunity for the 6th dan sensei and in some cases 5th dan to support and gain experience, as some have already done this year. We will where possible and convenient plan joint events with our two sister bu (Kendo / Jodo) if there is shared vision and shared responsibility in planning.

We also want to find ways of enhancing or spicing-up our regional seminars and will discuss ideas with the DRC of how to vary the input and especially format of some of our regional seminars. We also want to continue to build our STS-sessions to encourage as many people as possible to attend, and find new squad potentials. There has been discussion about moving the Nationals to an earlier or later quieter time in the calendar and about introducing venue rotation options, so that all areas get a fair chance of having the event in their area. This prevents the same people having to do all the travelling and bearing the associated stress and costs all the time and acknowledges that our membership reaches far and wide across the country. The Squad Manager has been working tirelessly to minimise cost to the laido-bu members meaning that already we have made very substantial savings for the EIC this year, but we do still have some choices to make as this is a very expensive event, of which no income is derived. Last year's event costing the Bu £11,600, which is £2,000 more what our four regional seminars cost.

Finally, we will also be working hard to design a superb 2018 Summer Seminar and we will discuss ideas as a Bu EC so we have a clear idea of what we want to discuss with the Japanese sensei when they visit later this month for the Summer Seminar.

Membership Numbers (as of May 7th, 2017)

Membership	2016	2017	Fees	Estimated Income
Full Adult	487	480	£25 (£10 to laido)	£4,800
Concessions	31	35	£15 (£5 to laido)	£175
TOTAL	518	515		£4,975
Dojo	22 / 62	24 / 65		

- Dojo number represent laido only and dojo that do two or more arts.

Budget Report 2018

Key Premises of Budget

- Existing events/ seminars to continue to be managed to 'cover costs' and make minimal profit to enable other initiatives such as EIC participation
- laido grading to continue to provide income
- Support of laido development through key initiatives such as negotiating the possibility of high grade seminars to raise knowledge and standards, or refereeing seminars provided at little or no cost to members
- To repackage squad activity to generate income to cover some of the costs associated with attending the EIC, and to do more pre-planning to cut associated costs of attendance

- Maintaining a realistic contingency surplus of two years running costs – which will also require the shedding of some funds (hence the minimising of profit from events and membership fees this year)

The table below is from Summer Seminar 2016 to the present and created using the data from Event Planners. As the Bu funds are organic and in a constant moving state, it is difficult to get exact figures.

Iaido	Expenses	Income
Bu Admin	777	
Summer Seminar	11,454	8,290
Northern Seminar	3,176	3,910
EIC 2016 (IT income)	11,650	*695
Spring Seminar	1,795*	3,735
Scottish Seminar	970	1,920
West Mids. Seminar	*	2,575
Nationals	1,290*	1,290
Post-AGM Event	600	0
STS (STS 1-3 income)	955	1,484
Donations	474	62
Free Seminar Places	5 people	0
Membership Fees	0	4,975
	33,141	28,936
Iaido Funds - Jan 2017		31,000
Ishido Fund		3,959

- *Best estimate at funds raised towards EIC costs in 2016 from IT Sessions*
- *Finalising one claim for Spring Seminar so minimal increase expected*
- *West Midland Seminar expenses are coming in now and so are not available at the time of writing*
- *It seems that our Nationals will likely break even – this is including the £100 towards 7th dan expenses the Bu paid (expenses not usually paid)*

Event Officer's Report

Overview

1. The aim of the current EO is to provide venues with timber floors to optimise practise and grading attempts. This is proving increasingly difficult because larger venues, with multiple halls are replacing many of their high-maintenance timber flooring with cheaper polymer surfaces making practise more difficult, more tiring and generally unpleasant for participants.
2. Subsequently, I would like to propose the unequivocal rule that we will only book timber-floored venues even if this means using venues that may have fewer conveniences specifically, catering facilities. To further facilitate the selection of suitable venues I propose to personally visit prospective venues and make a decisive assessment.
3. We aim to keep events as cheap as possible for the Iaido bu membership.

4. We have solicited suggestions from the membership and are implementing the better ones in future seminars.
5. The Northern Seminar could be moved to other Northern venues if local dojo is willing to assist the laido bu.
6. Discussions regarding invigoration of seminars by removing emphasis from grading aspect.
7. Discussion of organising a 'shinpan seminar' to raise knowledge and awareness of how to judge at taikai are taking place
8. Introduction on online booking for the National Taikai event.

Spring Seminar 2017 (Comberton, Cambridge)

On the surface, this venue fulfilled many criteria for a potentially excellent venue and in particular the training hall was of an excellent size and had a lovely sprung, timber floor. The issue was with basic amenities. The changing rooms were dirty, poorly-maintained, often with just one toilet cubicle in operation and in the case of the lady's changing facilities, lacked running water. There was also an all-pervading aroma of sewage in the entrance passage to the training hall giving the venue a decidedly third-world feel. Unless facilities improve, we will not use this venue next year despite the huge saving made on the 2016 costs.

Scottish Seminar 2017 (Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh)

The Scottish seminars appear to be burgeoning in their popularity. This is possibly down to the higher coach-to-student ratio (fewer people attend) but also to friendly, all-inclusive atmosphere in the training hall. The facilities at QMU are excellent and I have heard only positive feedback about this seminar. The seminar will go to Glasgow next year following alternating pattern already established between the two groups.

West Midlands Seminar 2017 (Moseley School and Fitness Centre, West Midlands)

Surprisingly, this turned out to be an inadequate venue despite the very best efforts of those who found and booked the venue. The EO received several comments about the unsuitability of the hall's flooring. I have briefly discussed the synthetic flooring issue in the overview, but the other issue was the venue booking staff had double-booked the main hall for the first hour of the seminar. The issue came on Sunday where the staff were scarce, unhelpful with regards the moving of table, chairs and mats for the setting up of the grading. We will not be using this venue again.

National Taikai 2017 (Forge Valley Sports Centre, Sheffield)

We worked with our Squad Manager to negotiate where we would hold this event this year. We found a new venue to match new ideas with the hope of invigorating the STS and the Nationals. As a consequence of this team work, this event proved to be a huge success, it being attended by more competitors than in recent years, including many new faces who would not ordinarily attend the Nationals. The organisation was incredibly slick thanks to the enormous efforts of Chris Buxton Sensei and David Hickey and considerable credit for its success must go to them. We introduced an online booking system for this year, in the hope reducing ephemeral paperwork and at the same time creating a simple digital record of all attendees that could be copy and pasted into draws and a digital record of the event. It made the whole process easier and more accountable. Any new endeavour will have teething troubles but these can be dealt with if we have sufficient notice and our members are excellent at booking in good time and alerting us to issue. We hope they will not occur again.

Summer Seminar 2017 (Munrow Sports Arena, University of Birmingham)

Everything is running on schedule at this brand new, internationally-rated venue. The planning and execution of the summer seminars is incredibly complex but I am confident that the bu will deliver a truly excellent seminar.

Northern Seminar 2016 and 2017

The 2016 seminar was, yet again, an excellent event and organised by the local dojo. I received a number of comments about the second venue (Darlington College, non-graders) being rather bleak sometimes cold and generally 'unpleasant', something I've heard and experienced many times over the years. The possible options for the future are to annually rotate the performance studio and Darlington College allocation between Jodo and non-grading laido, although the relatively larger numbers of non-grading laidoka may mean the performance studio is insufficiently-sized for them. The more viable option in my opinion, is to look for a more suitable hall in the area, several of which I am investigating.

The other issue with the current venue is the late confirmation of the hall booking by Kajima (the booking agency) who can only confirm bookings by August of each year to allow the school the opportunity to take priority in any of their bookings. This gives members about three months to decide if they wish to attend rather than the usual one year notice target we are aiming for. Three months seems adequate, but I have heard a few people suggest it is insufficient notice for them. If this is effecting large numbers of members (attendance rates suggest it isn't) then an alternative venue could be hunted for but this may mean moving the event to somewhere else in the North/North East.

Grading Officer's Report

Since the report at the 2016 AGM there have 5 five BKA laido grading seminars:

- Summer Seminar July 2016 Cambridge
- Northern Seminar November 2016 Darlington
- Spring Seminar March 2017 Cambridge
- Scottish Seminar April 2017 Edinburgh
- West Mids. Seminar May 2017 Birmingham

The pass rates for all grades from these seminars is as follows:

Ikkyu	100%	(32 graded.....all passed)	
Shodan	90%	(21 graded19 passed)	
Nidan	93%	(30 graded.....28 passed)	
Sandan	60%	(10 graded.....6 passed)	
Yondan	55%	(11 graded.....6 passed)	of which 2 passes were non BKA candidates.
Godan	50%	(8 graded.....4 passed)	of which 2 passes were non BKA candidates.

It is interesting to note that of the 112 candidates who have taken a grading with the BKA since the last AGM, the youngest was 17 years old and the oldest 75 years. Truly a Martial Art for all ages!

I would again like to thank all those members who have assisted me in ensuring the smooth running of the grading process over the last 12 months. However, I would also like to reiterate one point for potential grading candidates.

1. When submitting the grading paper please include any permanent or long term health issues you have which may impact on your grading performance (particularly if this means you cannot do seated kata)
Temporary injuries will not be taken into account.

Cashier's Report

The cashier role was handed over in November last year, a particularly busy time for expense claims, with both the EIC and Darlington. After a slow start – and with apologies to those affected by any delays in the payment of claims during the transition as I got up to speed the requirements of the role – claims are now being turned around more promptly. One of my observations on taking over the role is that if claimants take a more structured approach to preparing claims, then it's far easier to review and approve claims without having to spend significant amounts of time reconciling back to receipts (or lack thereof) and querying missing or incomprehensible items. Claims should be supported by appropriate receipts wherever possible, and I have to check that each line does agree to a receipt. So, ensuring all receipts are attached, and making it clear which receipts relate to which expense items is crucial. My first experience of a bundle of EIC claims with pages full of receipts in Hungarian and needing to be translated into Sterling from Hungarian Forints wasn't much fun at all and nearly had me giving up before I'd started. Guidance notes for claimants have been prepared and will be sent to faculty and squad in advance of events, so that claimants know what a 'good' claim looks like. If a claim is clearly presented, cross-referenced to supporting receipts and within policy, then it can be reviewed, approved and paid far more quickly.

Efforts have also been made within the bu during the year to clarify expectations about expense types and expense levels, so that claimants understand in advance what's considered reasonable and what they're entitled to claim for. We've also been aiming to block book hotels for seminars in advance wherever possible, which both secures best rates and also minimises out of pocket expenses for individuals. If we can manage our expense levels and help in containing overall bu costs, then membership and seminar fees can be kept lower, to all our benefit. The event attracting the most significant level of expense remains the EIC, from which no income can be derived, and for which the only thing we can control is expenditure – principally, the number of participants, and whether squad members are asked to contribute to expenses. Expenditure on the EIC (squad and faculty) represents around a third of the bu total income each year. There will be varying views on whether and to what extent squad members should or could contribute to costs (they currently don't which is not the norm with the other countries), and on the extent to which sending a full squad to EIC is important for the bu and the BKA – a much wider debate than for the cashier's report. Mileage expenses also remain a significant potential cost within individual expense claims. The BKA rate is currently set at the maximum HMRC-approved 'tax free' rate of 45p per mile, which can result in significant claims where longer distances are travelled. Mileage rates are a much-debated area of expenditure whatever organisation they occur in. Claimants, naturally, seek the highest possible rate for using their car, but organisations want the lowest possible cost. Many organisations are unwilling to pay the full HMRC rate, and instead focus on lower rates – such as those from the RAC or AA – that exclude the cost of ownership, recognising that the majority of individuals these days will already own a car, therefore only running costs need be reimbursed.

Squad Manager's Report

The 2016 EIC team resulted in two bronze medals (Anthony Baker – mudan and Andy Watson – rokudan), and a fighting spirit award (Daniel Silk – godan), which was followed-up with a bronze in the team event. Congratulation of their success.

One of my main aims as Squad Manager (SM) has been to reach out to as wide a band of the membership as possible. To do this, the team have worked hard to improve our organisation and communication with the membership, and one key aspect of this was being able to post all the Squad Training Sessions (STS) dates (and most of the venues) in January 2017. This hopefully gave the membership time to plan their attendances. In trying to reach more members, we have spread STS around the country. For example, we had our first ever Scottish STS, which proved very successful and generated new Scottish interest and squad members who are now competing for a place in the final team. We are also pleased to welcome

many other new faces and old familiar ones back into STS. We have also implemented an attendees' feedback document which has proved invaluable, and generally shows that people like the new STS format.

Information is posted on the BKA website calendar, the BKA website laido-tab and Facebook, we have also been E-mailing members (using Bucho's mass email ability) to try get information out to as many as possible. We are at pains to stress that the STS are open to all the membership until final team selection. We are glad of the support the members give us as it helps create a positive-vibe during STS, fund our final team and it also helps improve their own laido. As an aid to squad members, we post who is in the squad and their points in advance of all STS Sessions.

As SM, I have also developed a squad of named individuals (normally a max of 8 people per grade) and we have advertised clearly what BKA events are eligible for gaining points and being monitored. I have developed a coach-report-system which enables our coaches to record squad members they spoke to and what they wanted them to work on. These enable our coaches access to a written log that can be picked up and used by any squad coach later. This should enable us to support each other and give monitored, considered and ongoing feedback to individuals and inform our selection process about attendance, performance, attitude and potential.

As SM, I make sure STS-sessions have a pre-determined teaching plan. The aim is to not be like a seminar and so we have introduced coaching formats with the team coach and assistant coach responsible for the implementation of the new system, which is person specific and taikai orientated. Familiarisation of the taikai format and etiquette for both individual and team events are in my opinion an essential component of STS that should be addressed early so squad members can show their best at Nationals.

Finally, my biggest task is to get the most cost-effective means of moving and boarding our team in Turin, Italy, for the 2017 EIC. We have difficult choices to make if we are to be as cost effective as we can. By pre-booking flights, we have been able to save money, and by getting other hotels to quote against the organising hotel we can make informed choices to ensure the most cost efficient use of our member's money. It is difficult to minimise costs. We have also decided for reasons of cost and practicality to change the team uniform and what we require of anyone wishing to be on the final team regarding their participation and dress. We are working hard to create a healthy team ethos.

The Year Ahead and Subscriptions

- Invite cost effective faculty to events – while also allowing a fair share of the duties
- Continued scrutiny of expense policy to ensure long-term viability by offering modest expenses to all 6th-7th dan faculty
- Continue carefully sourcing suitable halls that are costs effective to the laido bu
- Continue with our successful advertising to encourage more active participation from members
- Work with the DRC to find new formats and focuses of seminars to invigorate the Bu activity
- More pre-planning and pre-booking for EIC to try to ensure best possible use of members' funds
- Meet with Japanese delegation leaders at the Summer Seminar to discuss next year's event with a specific focus also on introducing next-generation of Japanese seniors for succession planning

***The Bu EC recommend membership fees remain unchanged for the year ahead, with an adjustment if necessary on seminar fees dependent on discussion regarding EIC costs with the membership**

If you have any queries then contact the relevant officer via e-mail (addresses available on the BKA webpage: <http://www.britishkendoassociation.com/contact-us/>).