

**Iaido Bu AGM Minutes.**  
**06/07/2019.**

**Key:**

AA - Amanda Allen	AJ – Alex Jovanovic	AM – Ally Mihaylova	AN – Alan Nash
AW – Andy Watson	BF – Brian Ford	BT – Brian Tott	DA – Dave Ansell
DB – Debbie Bevan	DF – Dave Fanning	DG – Donnie Gordon	DS – Dan Silk
DW – Darren Waghorne		EM – Ed Marshall	GD -Greg Drewe
GR – Gavin Rogers	GW – Gill Wacey	HJ – Harry Jones	JH – Jock Hopson
KM – Kev McNeill	LB – Len Bean	LM – Lee Mountain	MC – Martin Chambers
MCL – Martin Clark	MT – Mark Thurman	OJ – Oliver Jarvis	PG - Paul Gledhill
RT – Rob Townson	SS – Stuart Shirreff	SV – Stoyanka Vidinic	TD – Tony Devine
WH – Willian Heal	XS – Xandy Sahla		

**Meeting opened 11:45**

**Apologies for Absence – KM (Squad Manager)**

Chaired by Bucho Will Heal

Motion to accept minutes of 2018 AGM.

Proposed: DG

Seconded: DW

Motion carried. (0 against, 1 abstention,).

No further comments arising from minutes.

GD (Squad Coach) invited to sit in place of KM (Squad Manager).

WH asked if there were any matters arising out of last year's minutes. None were raised.

No budget has been raised for 2018/2019 – this is addressed in the Bucho's report.

In summary WH stated that the current executive officers were all new to their roles and had made a good team, and that the Bu had returned to working closer with the Jodo Bu.

There had been some problematic issues regarding booking of venues which will be mentioned later.

**2018 Seminars:**

Since the last AGM there had been 4 seminars and the nationals as below:

Northern Seminar 2018: Organised by the previous Bu exec with thanks to them for that, and had gone well, surplus was made

Spring Seminar 2019: Surplus made, received positive feedback.

Scottish Seminar 2019: 36 attendees vs 29 in 2018, surplus made, received positive feedback.

Nationals 2019: 42 attendees vs 40 in 2018, small loss made of £90, Feedback - venue had some shortcomings, but spirit and atmosphere was good.

West Midlands 2019: 49 attendees vs 27 in 2018, surplus made, no specific feedback.

WH apologised in role of bucho for the issues over the confirmation of dates and venues for events.

The new team had learnt lessons from this years' experience and will be more prepared for next year.

**2019 Summer seminar**

The summer seminar is yet to occur. This will be led by Mastuoka sensei, Kinomoto sensei and will focus on ZNKR iaido at the same venue as last year.

Other Europe events:

The Ishido sensei 40th Anniversary seminar was being held in Eindhoven shortly after, which had enabled the BKA to share some of the costs for the summer seminar with that event. There was the risk that attendance may be lower than usual due to the number of events occurring though.

### **2019 Northern seminar:**

The dates originally proposed for the Northern Seminar clash with the EIC, therefore the date had to be changed. The following weekend was Remembrance Sunday which was ideally to be avoided so it had been provisionally moved to the subsequent weekend (16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup>). Confirmation of availability with the venue is pending.

### **Other**

The BKA had been asked by the EKF if they could hold a high grade seminar and the 2019 EIC but the Exec had turned down the offer as they felt they were new to their roles and wanted to achieve greater stability in the Bu first and there were also concerns about whether Brexit would go ahead and how which may have complicated things. The Bu hopes to hold another EIC at some point in the future though.

### **Gradings**

Regarding gradings, the Grading Officer will discuss more details later, however it was felt that there was a need to make sure Dojo Leaders made sure their dojo members were at the appropriate level before taking gradings.

DG stated that the dojo leader has little actual control over this – if a member wants to apply, assuming they are eligible, they can apply via the website whether they have the consent of their dojo leader or not. – to be discussed further in AOB.

### **Finances**

All income and expense has been accounted for. The closing balances for 2016, 2017 and 2018 were £31,000, £34,000 and £20,000 respectively.

The Exec has tried to get back to the NC's recommendation of 1 years running cost in reserve (£30,000).

Motion to keep the bu membership fees for 2020 at their current level (£10 for full, £5 for juniors/concessions).

Proposed: OJ

Seconded: DA

Motion carried unanimously.

### **Membership numbers**

Current Bu membership is 540 which approximately the same as last year.

### **Events Officer's Report (MC) and Discussion.**

It has been difficult trying to find venues and availability. Many Schools use 3<sup>rd</sup> party communal booking software to hire out their halls and often have bookings for just 1 hour or so here and there making it difficult to book a hall and virtually impossible to book 2 halls for a whole weekend.

We were let down twice by venues cancelling a confirmed booking.

Thanks go to AN for arranging the venue in Swindon for the Spring Seminar. Next year's seminar is likely to be Swindon again but possibly a different venue there.

MC would like to develop a better 'identity' for the Spring Seminar. For a long time, it always used to be held in Watchett but has moved around a lot since those days. If people are generally happy with Swindon, then it would be a good idea to anchor it there. It is good for accessibility etc.

There were similar venue booking problems for the nationals as the dates were in exam times when many Schools etc have their sports halls filled with desks and are not available for bookings. It would be nice to introduce a system of alternating the venue for the nationals between the north and the south.

There were two options left which were Sheffield and Loughborough. Loughborough was chosen as Sheffield was too expensive. This year's venue at Loughborough wasn't great and it won't be used again, a better venue will be sourced for next year. Possibly Stevenage, but could be somewhere else.

Overall attendance at seminars has been a little up compared to last year.

In conjunction with MT (Jodo Events Officer), the plan is to have the next couple of events booked by the end of Autumn.

Having devices to take card payments on the day has reduced cash income at seminars which makes admin easier. Card payments can now be made for gradings and seminars at the event.

SV wondered if changing the venue for Darlington could be considered as it is quite expensive and cheaper venues may be available. MC replied he could discuss with LM but cautioned that if somewhere works, it could be a risk if we move. We currently have a premium slot at the Darlington venues and if we give it up it may be difficult to get back again if other venues don't work out and we need to try and go back to the original.

Vote from jodo meeting regarding sharing of events?

Jodo events should be joined with iai events if possible to help those who do both reduce travel and seminars they need to attend.

Proposed: JH

Seconded: XS

Motion carried (2 abstentions, 0 against, remaining for)

EM requested that information be put on event flyers concerning changing facilities available for transgender participants. If no separate room already exists for that purpose can the venue set aside a room for us.

WH suggests it is up to the member to let the organisers know of the extra need.

DG stated he knows of a transgender student that uses the disabled toilets.

HJ advised that gender issues are important and we can't just 'wing it on the day' of a seminar.

Organisers need to be proactive and consider it in the planning of events so that what changing facilities are available can be communicated to members on event flyers etc.

WH - If the member feels the measures on the flyer are insufficient, they can contact the organisers for to look for a reasonable adjustment

MT agreed changing facilities should be investigated and did not think that getting someone to change in the disabled toilets was acceptable enough.

MC recognised this kind of issue was growing in importance and was happy to make enquiries with venues and put that kind of info on flyers.

SS raised the point that the hall at Darlington college might be cheap, but has very poor heating and it can get very cold.

WH replied that they can certainly try to find a better venue, we have a year to book the next.

XS agreed that it is good for events to have an identity and event success is related to the atmosphere of an events and its identity – regarding the point on the spring seminar.

DA mentioned that the laido EO and Jodo EO have worked closely together to find venues, and asked how closely the laido EO liaises with the Kendo EO as the Kendo Bu has a large list of remarkable venues.

MC replied that there is a list of venues, and it is shared, that he has not had much liaison with the Kendo EO but that most Kendo events are often hosted by individual host dojo (e.g Steve Pimley is heavily involved in organising Stoke seminar) and organised by them rather than the kendo EO. So the set up is different to that of the laido and Jodo seminars and are at known locations.

SS asked if there had ever been any issues with venues over what we are using them for ie sword arts?

MC replied not that he was aware of, he describes the event as BKA martial arts..

### **Special Thanks**

MC would like to add his thanks to Dave Hickey and Lee Mountain for their work on organising the next Scottish seminar and previous years Northern seminar respectively.

Billy Smart will be running the next Scottish seminar in Glasgow 2020. So when there are people on the ground organising seminars it really helps.

### **Grading Officer's Report (GW) and Discussion.**

Since last AGM there have been 5 seminars with gradings.

Overall pass rates at this year's seminars were as follows:

Ikkyu: 100%

Shodan: 94%

Nidan: 93%

Sandan: 91%

Yondan: 33.3%

Total of 80 candidates over 4 seminars

The pass rate obviously drops as the grade increases as pass criteria get harder.

GW requested that the menjo fees be included in the event flyers so people know how much to pay in advance. Now that they are moving to card payments for menjo too, grading related cash handling has reduced. Midlands seminar had the first card payment option which was successful.

GW would like to take the opportunity to thank those who have helped her in her role during the past year and helped with the smooth running of the gradings.

OJ requests also that the existing flyers are updated re card payment option. MC will look at this.

AW suggested that grading panellists should have a group discussion after a grading to share opinions and check that the right decision has been made. Would it be possible to compare grading pass results with other countries? Could this be something the Grading Officer could look into?

WH suggested that it could give a rough comparison but many factors are involved in when people go for a grading which may affect the results, eg length of training in between gradings.

AW agreed that whilst this was true, if a country's stats were away from the average by the fifth standard deviation then something was clearly different to the norm.

JH agreed it would be a good idea.

WH wondered if that is something the EKF could do however AW suggested that the EKF won't interfere in individual member countries affairs. The EKF already publishes the results of gradings on their website.

GW suggested that one issue could be people taking gradings when they are not ready for them without their dojo leader's approval.

SS added that whilst you can obtain info on pass rates for high level gradings in Japan, gradings for 5<sup>th</sup> dan and below are all prefectural and it will not be possible to obtain that info.

HJ stated that members have a constitutional right to attempt a grade and this can't really be removed. If they fail, then that's their fault.

JH stated that the right had been introduced because of problems with "dojo dictators" trying to control who graded.

DG wondered if part of the problem was dojo leaders giving allowing people to attempt a grade when they weren't ready.

WH was wary of trying to interfere with the internal running of a dojo but suggested that coaches and regional coaches could be utilised to promote grading at an appropriate time.

JH considered that the issue is one of the essential relationships between a dojo leader and their members. If a member doesn't accept his dojo leader's recommendation not to grade yet, then the leader and member relationship has broken down. He added that should a member decide to grade against his advice as dojo leader he wouldn't teach them again.

MCL reminded people that the role of the regional coaches is to support their local dojo, but this doesn't always happen.

SS stated he would prefer to have control over when members could grade. He had had a situation where he advised someone they were not ready to grade so they left his dojo and joined another. Perhaps there should be some formal communication in situations like this between dojo so it can be explained why someone left. Maybe dojo should have a Code of Conduct for members to agree to.

WH noted that there is sometimes a clash between Japanese cultural expectations of behaviour and the perhaps more democratic ideas of our society.

AW agreed in principle to a Code of Conduct. In Japan there are clear rules of behaviour but the organisation doesn't get involved as its difficult to adjudicate over whether the dojo leader or the member is at fault.

We are governed by The BKA which supports freedom of association. There is a difference between a fau par and a breach of conduct of the constitution.

AJ did not want the BKA to turn into an association of do's and don'ts and recommended these issues should be resolved at a dojo level.

AM stated she doesn't have a problem if a member of her dojo takes a grading against her advice and fails as it vindicates her opinion and doesn't think there should be a system in place to stop someone attempting a grading.

XS agreed with AJ that we shouldn't become an association of do's and don'ts but thought that it was important to have some guidelines of behaviour.

DF suggested it's a bigger problem if a member is advised not to grade but they do and pass.

PG stated the issue goes back to Japanese culture. A purpose of training is to become a better person and respect for your sensei is inherent. To grade without your sensei's permission is a lack of respect. If people want to do that then they should go and do something else. A Code of Conduct exists already – the "Do". No separate code is required.

WH drew the discussion to a close as time was pressing and advised that a Code of Conduct would need discussion with the NC.

### **Cashier's Report (RT).**

Thanks to all for adopting the new updated form, and submitting the expense claim forms appropriately.

### **Squad Manager's Report (KM).**

As KM was absent, WH read out his report (can be read on the BKA website). Main point of note was that there had been low attendance by low grades which needs to be increased and this will be looked at. Reiterated Intensive Training Sessions's (ITS's) are good value for money and please try and encourage low grades to come along.

Squad selection will be decided soon, sometime after the final ITS on 17<sup>th</sup> July. The selected squad will be contacted individually and later published on the BKA website.

GD added that numbers and atmosphere at the ITS's has been good and he hopes to take a full squad.

AM wanted to thank KM and the Iai Bu for working with the Jodo Bu and having joint ITS's and the nationals.

### **Complaints.**

No complaints were reported.

### **DRC Chair Feedback.**

XS standing in for Alan Nash - had nothing to report other than the idea of proposing a Code of Conduct at the following BKA AGM.

WH thanked XS for standing in to chair the DRC AGM.

### **Any Other Business.**

#### **Point 1. -**

#### **BF asked if something like a veteran's section could be introduced to the nationals for older people.**

He had been told that if a standing version of a seated form is performed then this is a negative point and stated that many people don't take part because of physical problems.

JH suggested it would be more inclusive that there would simply be a section for non-kneelers, but BF suggested this could match young and old together in the same section and there could be a large difference in the vitality of the competitors and questioned if this would be fair.

MC – This could end up with very disparaging matches, and numbers could be an issue as if done by grade then 3 of each grade would be needed – it would need to be looked into.

WH raised the point that in shiai you must be better than the other person as opposed to gradings where you simply have to show what you know. The only way to make things fairer is to make allowances for certain things but then this gets very complex in adjudicating.

JH queried what exactly veteran was to mean.

HJ asked where the cut-off point would be for veteran status and would this mean people would automatically become veterans. Some older people might still want to compete with younger people to test themselves.

BT did not think there was a need for a veteran's section and that age is immaterial. He can only do standing forms himself but is only concerned with doing his iai and not about other peoples' so doesn't mind if he gets beaten in shiai.

XS stated that iaido and jodo are very inclusive – there are no divisions into sex or weight categories etc.

AW mentioned that in Japan the issue of people being unable to perform kneeling kata in shiai was being discussed.

The membership could be asked to see how many people would be interested in a veteran's section. If there was no real interest, then there was no need to pursue it.

Numbers could be an issue as there would need to be a reasonable number of participants at a particular grade to make it worthwhile.

MC suggested that it could be a new division like the Asahi cup in jodo. Potentially it could be an embu taikai format as this would reduce the time needed and does not require as many participants as normal taikai to make it worthwhile.

WH thanked BF for raising the question and said the Bu would look into it.

## **Point 2.**

**WH informed the meeting that the BKA 'Use of Swords in Training document' was in the process of being updated and sought peoples' views on whether there should be a minimum grade for shinken use and what that should be.** The grade requirement for opening a dojo is shodan. Should this also be the same for shinken use?

Previous suggestion by HJ of Shodan as BKA has decided a Shodan can run a dojo.

OJ suggested it should be based on the student's ability not grade and the dojo leaders decision.

DS suggested that a dojo leader could potentially ok themselves to use one and that the grade requirement should be reasonably high as it is very easy to cut yourself with one and it takes time to develop the skills required to handle one appropriately.

JH reminded the meeting that there isn't just an issue of people cutting themselves but also others around them.

AM suggested that the principles of running a dojo are echoed in many life skills so relatively little iaido experience is required before one can set up your own dojo. However, routine handling of swords is not usually a life skill, so it is better to have a higher grade requirement for this.

DG cautioned that people can do strange things in class and there is a need for people to be aware of themselves and what's going on around them.

AW suggested that self-inflicted injuries are generally minor. Injuries to others are more likely to be worse but was not aware of any current issues where someone had injured another party with a shinken.

DG wondered how diligently accidents with shinken were recorded.

AW suggested that if there had been any accidents where a second party was injured, we would definitely know about it. He agreed that the grade requirement should be higher than shodan due to the risk.

EM proposed linking it to the coaching award eg level 1 coach.

GR wondered if the content of the BKA first aid course should be reviewed as he was not sure it particularly covered shinken related injuries and was more "office based".

AA stated that they have managed to arrange a course for members of her dojo with an A & E nurse to improve their first aid knowledge, but this is an informal event and has no official accreditation.

XS asked if the review was related to insurance and WH replied that it was not, it was just for recommendations.

TD's opinion was that the dojo leader is responsible for what occurs in their dojo and so the decision should be theirs as to who is able to train with a shinken.

HJ commented that the BKA first aid course is the same as work based first aid courses and should be adequate.

DB added that this may not be so as art specific things may need to be considered like removal of the men in kendo depending on circumstances/injury etc.

SS stated that stab wounds are now considered a significant risk in office-based environments etc so now work based first aid courses cover these injuries too.

AA cautioned that if an accident occurs and the insurance company starts asking more questions if a satisfactory answer can't be given then this may affect the insurance. She added that other factors should be considered apart from simply a grade eg teacher's approval, length of time at that grade. LB commented that in terms of handling and use, there should be no difference between an iaito and a shinken and that the most important factor is education within the dojo.

AM wondered if use could be linked to length of training rather than a grade as some people train for a long time before taking a grading.

SS stated that the term competence is often avoided in Health and Safety related documentation etc now. Individuals need to demonstrate SKATE (Skill, Knowledge, Ability, Training, and Experience). This would be a better basis on which to determine if someone should use a shinken rather than grade.

WH thanked everyone for their opinions and said these will be considered in the review of the document.

### **Point 3.**

AW **regarding use of funds** - explained that in the past the kendo bu would drain the funds of the BKA for use in kendo taikai to such a point that the iaido bu barely had the money to stay afloat. To ensure this would not happen, a new constitution was created and the BKA redesigned to have 4 separate accounts (ie kendo, iaido and jodo bu's and central services) to ringfence funds. People should be aware that over the period from 2017 to 2019, approx. £14,000 has been shed from the funds in the iaido bu account (~41%). If this continues, then the bu is once more at risk of going under and this needs to be avoided. The BKA's money is effectively the members' money and the members should think carefully about what that money should be used for. Hosting large events can generate significant income for the bu.

WH thanked the officers for their service over the last year.

**Meeting Closed.**