

Recreate Historical Swordsmanship from Historical Sources Introduction 01 Transcription

[Audio Length: 0:05:56]

RECORDING COMMENCES:

Guy Windsor:

Hello and welcome to this course in which we're going to recreate historical swordsmanship from historical sources. This is the first lecture, the introduction, so welcome. The purpose of this course is to give you the skills and confidence to work directly with historical sources. If you have a look at these pictures, you've got a page from Fiore dei Liberi's fantastic treatise from the early 15th century on the left and a page from Salvator Fabris' equally fantastic rapier treatise published in 1606 on the right. For many people, books like this are somewhat intimidating. They are obviously fabulous and glorious and beautiful and full of extremely cool sword fighting stuff but sometimes they're written in a foreign language, sometimes the pictures are difficult to interpret, sometimes it's all just a bit complicated and if you don't have a solid academic training in this sort of thing, it can be really hard just to approach these things. So what I'm going to try and do on this course is to give you the necessary skills and the necessary confidence so you look at one of those books and go "you know what? I can do that."

You might be asking who am I to be telling you this stuff and you should ask this question of every expert and the author of every book, treatise, source or reference, because let's face it: not every author really ought to be writing books and not everyone who claims to know stuff about swords actually does, and this is just as true today as it was hundreds of years ago. I would say it's especially important when you're considering modern experts like this chap on the left.

Hello. I'm Guy Windsor. I've been researching historical source material since about 1993. I have a degree in English literature from Edinburgh University so I know how to read books and stuff. I graduated in 1996. I founded The Dawn Duellists Society while I was in Edinburgh in 1994. That's still going after 22 years and you can imagine the 20th anniversary party. A bunch of swordsmen in a pub in Scotland. That went rather well. I founded The School of European Swordsmanship in 2001. It's still going and it has branches all over the world. You may have been to some of them. My first book came out in 2004. That was *The Swordsman's Companion*. I've written and published eight books since then and my training syllabus is online for all to see.

All that means though is it's easy for you to judge one way or the other whether my opinion and my approach, my way of doing things, is worth anything. So you can have a look at my videos and read some of my books and decide whether or not you think I know what I'm talking about and it's perfectly all right if you think I don't. I imagine that the reason you want to do your own research into these sources is that you don't want to have to rely on other people's interpretations; especially mine perhaps. It's really, really important, I think, that you have a really good idea as to the authority behind the stuff that you're practicing. You might practice your art because this is what

your teacher tells you to do and that's fine. You might practice it because this is how it was written down in this particular book hundreds of years ago. That's also fine. So long as you are absolutely clear what your authority is, you can practice authentically. I hope that by the end of this course you'll be able to use a book as your authority and have other people who have read the same book, look at it and go "do you know what? You're probably right."

This course will cover:

- Choosing a source from the many available and how to work with translations.
- Working with translations can be a little bit tricky because of course you're always dealing with somebody else's opinion as to what somebody else has said. Chinese whispers can set up if you're not careful so we'll go over that.
- Fencing theory which is identifying the practical and theoretical elements of the system so you can fit it all into a useful framework.
- How to approach the source itself.
- How to extract the core techniques and plays.
- How to construct basic drills from those plays so that you have something to actually practice. How to identify the system that's represented in the source once you've practiced some of these drills.
- How to design a syllabus that represents the system so you can take somebody from absolute beginner all the way through your syllabus and by the end of that they will be able to do the system that is represented by the source that you have chosen.

Now this is a course and of course we have homework. It doesn't have to hurt. It should be actually quite interesting and fun. I want you to get cracking doing stuff as early as possible. You might ask what is next? and that's a reasonable question. What is next is we will cover what exactly is a source anyway because here I am blathering on about treatises and sources and manuscripts and things. I would just want to define my terms so we're absolutely clear what we're all talking about. That will take us to the end of the introduction section and from there we'll go on to having to find a source, choosing the source that's right for you.

Let me just give a nod to New Comma Baroque who put this lovely recording of Marin Marais; *Sonnerie de Sainte-Genève du Mont de Paris*. Excuse my atrocious French accent. They put this [music] online for anyone to use for free which is very sweet of them. Thank you very much indeed. I hope you enjoy it. I think it makes an appropriate background to this sort of historical study that we're about to be doing. I look forward to seeing you in on the next lecture. See you then.

END OF RECORDING