

**Drills for Single Sword**  
with Baron AElfred of Chester  
(c)2004 C. Allen Reed

One of the hardest things for the student of the noble science of defence to learn is the use of footwork and blade work from the Renaissance manuals. These drills are set up to help the student work on the use of both in offensive and defensive techniques. Words in italics are defined in the glossary of terms at the end of these notes.

The *Agent* will use the four stances used by Agrippa and DiGrassi. The *Agent* will always use the offensive footwork of DiGrassi where the back foot is brought forward and then the attack is done as the front foot moves forward. The *Agent* will always work from a sword foot forward stance.

The *Patient Agent* will be defending against the attack of the *Agent*. The *Patient Agent* will always start in *low ward* or *terza*, in this drill, with right foot forward and left foot to the rear (obviously this may be switched for the left handed fencer but then the *Agent* will also have to change his stance or the partners will have to modify the drills to fit a left handed fencer against a right handed fencer.)

The first part of the drill (A) will have the *Patient Agent* using only footwork to respond to the *Agent's* offensive move. The second part of the drill (B) will allow the *Patient Agent* to use a sword to respond to the attack. All counter attacks will be done, when possible, in *stesso tempo*.

### I. Defense Against Thrusts

#### Drill #1A

*Agent*: From *prima/high ward* the *Agent* will do an *imbrocatta* to the *Patient Agent's* head.

*Patient Agent*: Does a *slope pace* to the left with the left foot.

#### Drill #2A

*Agent*: From *seconda/broad ward* will do *imbrocatta* to *Patient Agent's* torso.

*Patient Agent*: Does a *compass pace*.

#### Drill #3A

*Agent*: From *terza/low ward* does a *foyne* to the outside line of *Patient Agent*.

*Patient Agent*: voids by slope pacing to left with left foot..

#### Drill #4A

*Agent:* From *quarta/punta riversa* does *stocatta* to torso of *Patient Agent*.

*Patient Agent.* does *slope pace* with right foot.

#### Drill #1B

*Agent:* Same footwork and attack

*Patient Agent:* Same footwork. Counter attack with *stocatta* to torso of *Agent*.

As *Patient Agent* thrusts turn sword so *true edge* is to right side of *Patient Agent*.

#### Drill #2B

*Agent:* Same footwork and attack

*Patient Agent:* Same footwork. Bring blade into *quarta* catching blade of *Agent*.

Do *punta riversa* to torso or head of *Agent*.

#### Drill #3B

*Agent:* Same

*Patient Agent:* Same footwork. Brings hand and sword up into *broad ward* catching/parrying *Agent's* sword. Does *imbrocatta* to *Agent's* head.

#### Drill #4B:

*Agent:* Same

*Patient Agent:* Same footwork. *imbrocatta* to torso of *Agent*. As *Patient Agent* thrusts turn *true edge* toward left of *Patient Agent*

## II. Defense Against Cuts

Cuts were used both by users of the sidesword and the rapier. This series of drills will help the student of defence learn to defend against and use cuts. All cuts by the *Agent* will be done with the *true edge* of the sword. The *Agent* will use the same four starting positions and same footwork on the attack.

Again the first part of the drill will have the *Patient Agent* practicing only footwork. The second half of the drill the *Patient Agent* will respond with cuts.

#### Drill #1A

*Agent:* *fendente* to head of *Patient Agent* from *prima/high ward*.

*Patient Agent:* *intagliata* with right foot.

#### Drill #2A

*Agent:* Makes a *tondo mandritto* to torso of *Patient Agent* from *broad ward/seconda*

*Patient Agent.* *slope pace* with left foot

### Drill #3A

*Agent:* Makes a *tondo mandritto* to right leg of *Patient Agent* from *low ward/terza*.

*Patient Agent.:* voids by stepping back with right leg.

### Drill #4A

*Agent:* From *punta riversa/quarta* makes *tondo reverso* to torso of *Patient Agent*.

*Patient Agent.* slope pace with right foot.

### Drill #1B:

*Agent:* Same

*Patient Agent:* Same footwork. Do *tondo mandritto* to belly of *Agent*.

### Drill #2B:

*Agent:* Same

*Patient Agent:* Same footwork. Catch sword of *Agent* at forte with forte. Control sword of *Agent* with hand. Do a *redoppio reverso* with the *false edge* to head of *Agent*.

### Drill #3B

*Agent:* Same

*Patient Agent:* Same footwork. *tondo reverso* to wrist of *Agent*.

### Drill #4B

*Agent:* Same

*Patient Agent:* Same footwork. Catch forte at forte. Use opposite hand to control *Agent's* sword and do a *tondo mandritto* to *Agent's* head.

## Glossary

Many of the terms used in this glossary are from Renaissance Italian. These terms are designated by (It.)

*Agent:* The fencer who initiates the action

*Broad ward:* DiGrassi's second ward. The arm is held straight out to the side at shoulder height. The point of the sword is towards opponent. See also *terza*.

*Compass pace:* A pivot to void an attack. Usually on the front foot.

*False edge:* The "back" edge of the sword.

*Fendente:* (It.) A vertical cut, usually to the head

*Foyne:* An Elizabethan English term for thrust.

*High ward*: DiGrassi's first ward. The sword hand is held above the head with the point of sword aimed at the opponent. See also *prima*.

*Imbrocatta*: (It.) A thrust over the opponent's blade, hand or dagger. The thrust travels downwards with knuckles up as in *prima*.

*Intagliata*: (It.) A cross step with the forward foot to *avoid* an attack

*Low ward*: DiGrassi's third ward. Sword hand is held between the waist and the knee outside the leg. The point of the sword is toward the opponent.

*Mandritto*: (It.) A cut from the right to the left

*Patient Agent*: The fencer who responds to the *Agent's* actions

*Prima*: (It.) Agrippa's first position, see *high ward*

*Punta*: (It.) Point or thrust

*Quarta*: (It.) Agrippa's fourth position. Sword arm is brought across the body. Usually the *true edge* of sword is to the left when using the right hand. Also, sometimes called *punta riversa*

*Redoppio*: (It.) A rising diagonal cut (from hips to shoulder)

*Riversa*: (It) Any backhand cut or thrust.

*Seconda*: (It.) Agrippa's second position. Can either be like DiGrassi's *broad ward* or the sword arm is held straight in front of the body.

*Slope pace*: from DiGrassi, a step on the diagonal, usually with the back foot, to *avoid* a thrust. Also, called a crooked pace.

*Stesso tempo*: (It.) Translates as "in one time". So defense and offense are accomplished at the same time.

*Stocatta*: (It.) A thrust under the opponent's arm. Hand is usually held in pronation. Thrust is often to the belly.

*Terza*: (It.) Agrippa's third position, see *low ward*

*Tondo*: (It.) A horizontal cut.

*True edge:* (It.) The "front" edge of a sword. This is the edge that lines up with the knuckles of the hand.

*Void:* To move the body to *avoid* an attack.

## **Bibliography**

Morton, E.D. *Martini A Z of Fencing* Queen Anne Press, London, England

Siggs, Roger Camillo *Agrippa's 'Trattato Di Scienza d'Armes'* 2001. Proceedings of The Known World Academy of the Rapier

Wilson, William E. *The Arte of Defense: A Manual on the Use of the Rapier* 1996. Tattershall Arms, Flagstaff, Arizona

Anyone who has questions about these drills can contact Baron AElfred/Allen Reed at [GallowglassAcad@aol.com](mailto:GallowglassAcad@aol.com)