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NEWS OF THE DUELS

RESTORATION DUELLING CULTURE AND THE EARLY MODERN PRESS

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ABSTRACT

The period between 1660 and 1670 was an eventful one for both Britain and its martial arts. 1660 saw the Restoration, where the Stuart dynasty was returned to power under Charles II and the post-Civil War Commonwealth swept away. For all the optimism at Charles' coronation, however, his kingdom was ill at ease. Such uneasy times were also significant for the press. It is what the press (and other sources from this period) reveal about duelling practice at the time, martial arts in general, and the changing nature of violence that is the focus of this article. As the insurrections, riots and various acts of violence taking place both in Britain and abroad demonstrate, the 1660s were certainly a violent time. But, as the newspaper coverage also demonstrates, the nature of violence itself was changing. This continued a trend, dating back to the Civil War, where close quarter fighting skills had begun to give way to the relative ease and convenience of firearms. British violence found itself, ironically, in as much a state of flux as the rest of the country.

INTRODUCTION

The period between 1660 and 1670 was an eventful one for both Britain and its martial arts. 1660 saw the Restoration, where the Stuart dynasty was returned to power under Charles II and the post-Civil War Commonwealth swept away. For all the optimism at Charles' coronation, however, his kingdom was ill at ease. Dissent, and the further threat of yet more insurrection, was a reality both king and country had to face. In the next 10 years, war, plague, the Great Fire of London and ongoing conflicts over politics and religion all demonstrated the vulnerability of a society where the horrors of the English Civil War were still within living memory. Haunted by the 1649 Regicide of Charles I and the legacy of the Civil War and the Commonwealth, Charles II's new kingdom faced anxieties that lingered long after his apparently triumphant return [Jenkinson 2010: 22-23]. One clear shift had certainly taken place: While the Royalists brought back their aristocracy, this old order now competed with a rising middle class and powerful men whose influence came from wealth rather than lineage. The birth of a society more like our own than what had come before had begun [Seidel 1972: 433].

Such uneasy times were also significant for the press, which, by the middle of the 1660s, had become to all intents and purposes a branch of the state. The news could certainly still inform and remained popular, but it served only to keep the public as informed as the government saw fit. This contradictory approach, as we shall see, led to an often strange way of reporting the news – to the extent that foreign newspapers often had more British coverage than the British papers themselves [Pettegree 2014: 239]. Yet they also had surprising levels of success and even engagement with readers. In terms of what they both reveal and conceal, these newspapers demonstrate a great deal about British society during the Restoration, its preconceptions and its place in the world.¹

It is what they (and other sources from this period) reveal about duelling practice at the time, martial arts in general, and the changing nature of violence, that is the focus of this article. As the insurrections, riots and various acts of violence taking place both in Britain and abroad demonstrate, the 1660s were certainly a violent time. But, as the newspaper coverage also demonstrates, the nature of violence itself was changing. This continued a trend, dating back to the Civil War, where close quarter fighting skills had begun to give way to the relative ease and convenience of firearms. British violence found itself, ironically, in as much a state of flux as the rest of the country.

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AN UNEASY CITY

To understand how the Restoration press covered violence at the time, however, it must be placed into context. The first such context was London – the city where most news was produced both before and after the 1662 licensing act was passed into law [Griffiths 2006: 14]. This was a city ill at ease with itself. On the one hand, it was certainly one of the biggest cities in Europe and the largest in Britain. While nationwide population growth stagnated, London's population increased. By 1666, it had risen to 460,000 [Creighton 2013: 660], while, between the 1660-1670 period, even taking into account the Plague and Great Fire, overall it underwent a net increase of 80,000 [Harris 1987: 11].² It was a centre for the printing industry, to the extent that its practise largely informed what printing activity there was in the provinces [Harris 1996: 9]. Meanwhile the vogue for coffee houses had first taken root in London before spreading across the rest of the country. These provided not only a forum for discussion but also a place where newspaper and newsletter content could be freely disseminated over drinks and discussion [Somerville 1996: 58].

The city itself, despite the Plague and the Great Fire, was a fertile ground for early news media and a growing intelligentsia, of sorts. While male literacy nationwide was around 30% and female literacy around 10%, in London it was over 70% for men and up to 20% for women [Raymond 1996: 241]. London also had excellent news distribution networks; newspapers and newsbooks could easily be bought off the street [Raymond 1996: 238], often with women serving as the well-remunerated sellers [O'Malley 1986: 31]. A nascent form of the Royal Mail meant that distribution of news from London to the provinces was ever more easy and accessible, if not entirely secure, as government interception and distribution of mail at this time went hand in hand [Brayshay 2016: 64-65].

From a martial arts perspective, London also had much to offer. In between a general passion for violent blood sports, public floggings and hangings [Picard 2004: 212], Londoners could also avail themselves of fencing matches (as opposed to duels), boxing and wrestling [Picard 2004: 210]. The 'Trained Banded' served as a loyal if not always effective local militia, while demobbed soldiers and sailors were both a social problem, given their propensity to riot [Bucholz and Ward 2012: 278], and a demonstration that fighting prowess throughout London was not hard to find [Seaward 1991: 31].

Yet London was haunted as well as titillated by such violence, fitting for a capital city still haunted by the English Civil Wars. Old lingering

2 It would reach 575,000 by 1700 [Schwarz 2003: 126].

roundhead sympathies remained, as did antipathy towards the restored aristocracy [Seidel 1972: 442]. A deep fear of the mob and its vulgar, revolutionary tendencies was also at the back of many well-to-do Londoners' minds. The masses were held in both fear and contempt [Seidel 1972: 430-431]. Civil unrest in the wake of the plague outbreak of 1665, the devastation of the Great Fire of London and the disastrous scuttling of the fleet at Medway in 1667 at the hands of the Dutch all showed a city in a fragile state and at odds with itself [De Krey 2005: 95]. Fear of French or Catholic plots as well as out-and-out race riots were common events during this time. The 1661 armed uprising by Venner and his fellow 'Fifth-Monarchist' compatriots also demonstrated that insurrection, of the kind many still remembered only too well during the 1640s, was still a possibility [Greeves 1986: 50-57]. Yet any threat it may have posed was minor compared to the harshness of the government's response or the weight of coverage the uprising received in the press, as will be discussed later.

Then there were the ever-present crowds of Londoners, who would gladly deal out rough justice towards suspected criminals as well as free others from prison or the stocks if they were deemed innocent or unjustly treated [Harris 1990: 24]. Indeed, a certain level of rowdiness was even celebrated, especially amongst young men, as it was seen to show a kind of manly virtue. This was openly tolerated during the yearly festivals of misrule, which had overtly violent and even misogynistic rituals [Turner 2002: 61]. Crowds could also often be summoned by the beating of a drum or similar instrument, hinting at an almost paramilitary flavour to their actions [Harris 1990: 25].

London's volatile, often poor and frustrated population of apprentices were another problem. Ranging from the sons of paupers to the surplus scions of the nobility, they were, needless to say, an ongoing source of unrest [Seidel 1972: 442]. A notorious example came in the form of the 1668 Messenger Riots, when a combined force of apprentices and sailors destroyed brothels, attacked prisons holding their compatriots and were finally quelled only through military intervention and subsequent trials for high treason [Harris 1990: 82]. Well organised along military lines, down to 'regiments' being led by 'captains', these rioters demonstrated that London was a tinderbox where the traumas of the Civil Wars remained underneath the surface alongside old militarised habits passed on from father or grandfather to rowdy and pugnacious son or grandson.

The ability of the city to police itself was often called into question too. 'Constables' were members of the public pressed into service, often without pay, and open to varying levels of corruption or intimidation [Beattie 2001: 172], their effectiveness uneven and varying from ward to ward [Beattie 2001: 183]. The issue reached such a point that Charles

himself denounced them as 'a few weak and feeble men' whose tendency to go home before dawn gave criminals ample time to wreak havoc in their absence [Beattie 2001: 174]. In their defence, constables often had to live amongst the people they sought to police and were often victims, sometimes fatally so, of angry crowds [Shoemaker 1991: 241].

As a result, London was also a place where crime was a common occurrence. Crime in the city naturally spread out into neighbouring areas, such as Surrey [Beattie 1974: 51], where highwaymen and robbers prospered [Picard 2004: 233]. What kept crime under control, ironically, was a divided criminal underworld and fierce competition for the proceeds of crime [McMullan 1981-1982: 320]. Meanwhile, at least until the Great Fire swept much of the old city away, its many rat runs, 'pennyrent' flophouses and alleys gave rise to a series of shanty towns and no-go areas where crime both prospered and radiated outwards [McMullan 1981-1982: 314]. Whether this translated into an epidemic of violent crime is, in a sense, irrelevant as it was the perception that it was endemic which loomed large in the public consciousness, and at all levels of society [Beattie 2001: 46].

Certainly, tolerance or even enjoyment of violence was considered perfectly acceptable. The gruesome public execution of regicide Hugh Peters in 1660 was a case in point, as was the gleeful press coverage thereof [Parliamentary Intelligencer, 15 October 1660-22 October 1660]. Death itself was dealt with in such a matter-of-fact way as to verge on the comical. For example, a 1663 advert in the *Mercurius Publicus* inquires about the identity of a skeletonised corpse, possibly murdered, and 'lately found buried in a Back-Yard' in Chelmsford, but with a certain lack of urgency [*Mercurius Publicus*, 2 April 1663-9 April 1663].

Plague, unrest and the Great Fire demonstrated London's capacity for chaos, but day-to-day life in the city was seldom easy either. Living standards had stagnated in London, despite its booming economic and population growth during this period [Boulton 2000: 475]. Inflation and a dependence on goods being imported into the city from the rest of the country left many Londoners poorer and at the mercy of rising rents and declining fortunes, especially in the wake of the Great Fire [De Krey 2005: 94]. That disaster, alongside plague, war and insurrection, took their toll. London itself remained riven with unease and mistrust, and by 1670 these divisions had still not resolved themselves. For many Londoners, newspapers and newsbooks, read in private or out aloud in coffee shops, were a welcome distraction from a turbulent decade.

THE PRESS

What sort of press emerged from this milieu? As it happens, the end result was a mix of official paranoia and anxiety, and yet a mixture of contrasts, much like London itself. News at this time came in four forms – newsbooks, newspapers, newsletters and informal gazettes [Sommerville 1996: 60; Atherton 1999: 40]. Newsbooks, which narrated the news in a fashion more akin to a prose-based narrative, were in any case in decline. What I term ‘informal gazettes’ were not newspapers in the strictest sense, but still a kind of periodical journalism in the way that they reported recent events, such as the Bills of Mortality [Sommerville 1996: 66]. Meanwhile, *Philosophical Transactions*, a regular summary of discussions between members of the recently formed (in 1662) Royal Society of London for the Promotion of Natural Knowledge, helped disseminate scientific debate and knowledge and was the predecessor of the modern academic journal [Sommerville 1996: 80].

However, the primary focus of this article will be newspapers, as these were the most common mass-marketed (by 17th century standards) news media of the period. From 1666 onwards, the only legal newspaper in the country was *The London Gazette*, published by the government. Yet press control had already been asserted in 1662 by the Licensing Act, which reduced the number of news outlets to two newsbooks – *The Intelligencer* and *The Newes* – published by Roger L’Estrange, a former pamphleteer turned government propagandist, official censor and press baron. L’Estrange echoed the alarm felt by his paymasters towards the masses, though he saw news media as both a threat to the social order but also as an ideal way to establish the government’s good name [Ward 2005: 126].

Thus, L’Estrange established the convention for the times, where foreign news took precedence over domestic events – so as not to encourage any local restiveness – and to defend to the hilt a Royalist worldview with perhaps more vigour than was required [Clark 1994: 24-25]. L’Estrange was not, however, a particularly good journalist; he failed to cover the plague outbreaks in London in much detail [Sutherland 1986: 45] and was generally inept [Sommerville 1996: 63] in terms of copy-editing and reporting [Pettegree 2014, 238]. His newsbooks were replaced by *The Oxford Gazette*, latterly the *London Gazette*,³ now run directly from the offices of the Secretaries of State under Joseph Williamson, from 1666 onwards.

The end result, while more competent and better written, was also as strictly controlled and faintly pessimistic of its readers as L’Estrange’s

work ever was [Pettegree 2014: 239]. Indeed, as well as providing a sanitised and unthreatening product to sate the country’s insatiable appetite for news [Pettegree 2014: 239], it employed several spies on its staff and regularly smeared opponents with propaganda [Ward 2005: 239].

Yet despite its blandness and obvious side-stepping of domestic controversy, the *Gazette* was nonetheless immensely popular [Atherton 1999: 125], its editorial staff only too aware that an unpopular paper would not have sold so many copies. Within the very tight confines in which it operated, therefore, the *Gazette* had nonetheless very high standards of accuracy, information and fact-checking [Pettegree 2014: 239]. It was, when allowed to be, a very informative if very brief newspaper. Printed on both sides of a single broadsheet, in the Dutch fashion [Pettegree 2014: 238] the *Gazette* also broke away from the conventions of the newsbook in a direction far more recognisable by newspaper readers today.

It also had, perhaps despite the best efforts of its editors, a surprisingly close relationship with its readers. While it vowed not to take advertisements at its launch [Rosenfeld 1936: 124], the newspaper did nonetheless feature ‘Loyal Addresses’ from readers – in effect, an early form of the letters page – where personal views could be expressed, albeit with an inevitable degree of editorial oversight and, of course, a favourable view of the King [Sutherland 1986: 172]. As Sommerville has noted [1986: 73], there are interesting parallels between the *London Gazette* and ‘official’ Soviet news organs such as *Pravda* and *Izvestia* – all were closely controlled, censorious and partial publications, yet readers still communicated with them through letters and feedback, using them as a means of getting the attention of the authorities as well as a source of news [Sutherland 1986: 74].

Perhaps no surer example of this can be seen than how the *London Gazette* responded to the Great Fire of 1666. As Wall has noted, its response to the disaster, while at first delivered with its usual reserve, quickly shifted to actively reporting reconstruction of the city and featuring advertisements – for the first time – that supported it [Wall 1998: 63-64]. In so doing, the paper began to reflect more than ever the views and experiences of its readers [Wall 1998: 66] and to provide a public voice hitherto considered unthinkable [Wall 1998: 10]. Similarly, the numerous stories, and later adverts [O’Malley 1986: 40], in the *Gazette* covering providential events and prodigies not only reflected the religious beliefs of its readers but also their need for confirmation of this fact [O’Malley 1986: 36, 42]. How, then, did this contradictory, nuanced and often surprising newspaper, and others, cover duels? Fittingly, the answer is both contrary and yet curiously revealing.

³ Renamed after its move from Oxford to the capital after the decline of the Great Plague.

DUELLING IN THE NEWS

Certainly, duelling did take place in London during the period. At this point, at least, the duel remained an urban phenomenon [Shoemaker 2002: 537]. They could nonetheless still be surprisingly violent, despite the start of a slow decline in duels overall. A 1668 duel, between the then Duke of Buckingham and Lord Shrewsbury also featured two other men per duellist, with the resulting melee resulting in injuries for all and two deaths [Shoemaker 2002: 537]. Duelling was also very much still a pastime of the wealthy, gentry and nobles [Shoemaker 2002: 544], and was often cause for pleas to the King for 'special pardon', as even the elite of Restoration London could be tried and found guilty of manslaughter and murder [Shoemaker 2002: 288]. Needless to say, the government took a very dim view of its would-be political leaders and military officers killing each other. While issuing insults in and of themselves were not crimes, if they were intended to commence a duel, this became an arrestable offence [Shoemaker 1991: 29]. Examples could be and were made, as was the case with Sir Thomas Coventry, who found himself imprisoned in the Tower of London [Picard 2004: 237].

Yet most significantly, the then still independent press itself reported the official government line. In 1660, the *Mercurius Publicus* published the following Royal Proclamation:

His Majesty ... having formerly in a Declaration published at Brussels November 23 1658, manifested his dislike of impious and unlawful Duels, strictly command all his subjects whatever, that they do not by themselves or any others, either by Message, Word, Writing, or other ways or means, challenge, or cause to be challenged, any person or persons to in Duel, nor to carry, accept, or conceal any challenge, nor actually to fight or be a second to any therein.
[*Mercurius Publicus*, 9 August 1660–16 August 1660]

The proclamation went on to add that any defiance of this would see the duellist barred from public office and the Court in general, in addition to legal prosecution in the usual sense. How serious was the Crown in this regard? Another report on the proclamation, this time in the *Parliamentary Intelligencer*, puts the interdict into context:

On Monday August 13, several Proclamations were given by his Majesty Against fighting of Duels: For calling in and suppressing Books of John Milton and John Goodwin, and for publishing a former Proclamation of the 30th of May, entitled A Proclamation against Vicious, Debauch'd, an
[*Parliamentary Intelligencer*, 13 August 1660–20 August 1660]

In other words, the State considered duelling to be as much of a threat to the stability of the regime as the writings of dissidents, all symptoms of a moral degeneracy it was determined to stamp out.

This did not stop duelling happening. Indeed, even the *London Gazette* could not resist reporting on the travails of the Duke of Buckingham and the aftermath of Lord Morley-and-Monteagle's killing of Henry Hastings [Sommerville 1996: 68]. Similarly, popular culture still romanticised duelling, as one 1670 song's lyrics demonstrate:

**And I will place you on a Stage,
To fight a Duel you must ingage,
And from all Wounds you shall be clear,
You'll gin the Prize you need not fear.**
[Anon 1670]

Meanwhile, as Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, declared in a 1664 letter, 'Gallant Valiant Gentlemen in the day of Battel or Duel' were equally valid [Cavendish 1664: 143]. Yet there was also considerable opposition to the practice, and not just from the King. In 1660, the Royalist churchman Richard Allestree argued in his book *The Gentleman's Calling*:

And upon this hostility and opposition against Heaven it is, that all the private Quarrels and Combats on Earth are (as on their foundation) superstructured; so that to initiate a Duelist, his first Challenge must be directed against God himself.
[Allestree 1660: 141]

Allestree then goes on to make his point even more explicit:

For to a Christian, 'tis certain the irreligion of Fighting a Duel would be the most infamous thing, and even to a sober Heathen the folly of it would be so too ... Yet this so pitiful despicable thing is it, which so terrifies and amazes them; And how shall we define Cowardise, if this be not it?
[Allestree 1660: 145]

Allestree's writing reflects his times, where the fear of violence was all too evident. Secondly, the sheer vehemence of Allestree's rhetoric and his couching it in theology suggests he was reflecting a widespread view, at least amongst his fellow churchmen. Allestree was certainly not alone in his criticism either. Religious and establishment criticism continued into the next century [Shoemaker 2002: 539]. Yet Allestree also demonstrates how the controversy had split the establishment. Allestree, loyal to the King during the Commonwealth and later Provost of Eton College, was certainly no fringe figure. Yet neither was

Cavendish, nor many of the duellists themselves. This was just another of many conflicts and dilemmas faced by Restoration Britain at the time.

As for how the London Gazette reported duels: for the most part, it struck a precarious balance between an official disapproval of duelling and readers' vicarious fascination with it. This is evident, as mentioned, in coverage of those rare domestic duels that made it into the paper. Yet the Gazette found an altogether more pragmatic and uncontroversial way of sating this appetite that played to its strengths in intelligence gathering; duels in the Gazette, as a rule, always took place abroad:

The Prince della Recca Filomarino having been lately killed in a Duel, the Dukes of Mataloni; Pipoli and St. Geogio, who were engaged therein having been committed to the Fort of Gaeta are since removed to Castel Nuova where they are using their endeavours an employing their Ingerget for their Liberties.
[London Gazette, 21 October 1667-24 October 1667, Issue 202]

This has everything a good duel story needs – death, drama, celebrity/nobility and a hypocritical though no doubt well-received moral. Best of all, from the Gazette's perspective, its foreignness not only means it can report the story in the first place but also that further moralising can take place. A reader perusing the Gazette in their local coffee shop could get their duelling fix whilst at the same time feeling superior to decadent foreigners. Another example of this demonstrates similar themes and undertones:

Naples, Novemb. 15. The Vice Roy has sent the Officer de la Vicaire into the Provinces of Leve and Barr, to guard the Duke of Martina, the Count de Connerfano, the Prince de Carfi, the Duke de Noja, and other Noble-Men, who were arrested upon the death of the Duke delle Noci, who as we hear, some time since was killed in a Duel by the said Duke de Martina.
[Oxford Gazette, 21 December 1665-25 December 1665, Issue 12]

This approach also meant that the deaths of Britons abroad through duelling could be reported, any bad example set being remedied by the fact that this took place outside the country:

Three of our Men of War are come home to be repaired, and will suddenly be refitted and returned to the Armata; From Candia we are informed of the death of two of our ablest Engineers, of whom one was killed in a Deull, the other by a Musquet shot, as he was observing the fortifications of Candia.
[London Gazette, 6 December 1666-10 December 1666, Issue 111]

The death of the 'ablest Engineers' is portrayed as a tragedy; the morality of the duel itself is avoided. Once again, the foreignness of the duel allows for an altogether more tolerant approach.

It is worth noting that something is missing here, however. That is, for the most part, the details of the duels are not discussed, and we are not given much information about how they were fought. This is unlikely to be down to censoriousness or squeamishness on the part of the Gazette. It was more than willing to discuss, for example, details of painful punishments, such as those visited upon four young Scottish criminals in 1665, publicly flogged, branded and deported for assaulting a clergyman [Intelligencer Published for the Satisfaction and Information of the People, 25 December 1665; Issue 8].

Instead, a more likely explanation is that readers did not as a rule need to be reminded what a duel was. It was an established if not acceptable facet of life, particularly in London, and readers would have needed no introduction to fencing or swords. Yet the reality of the duel could only be reported in the abstract. Readers knew what a duel involved, but the implied consensus seems to have been that the duels happening on British soil were not to be discussed, at least in official publications. Compare and contrast with Samuel Pepys' diary entry in January 1668, where the injuries dealt by the duel he describes, between the Duke of Buckingham, a rival and their seconds are discussed with blunt openness [Peltonen 2003: 204]. As Pepys concludes, with some sarcasm:

This will make the world think that the King hath good counsellors about him, when the Duke of Buckingham, the greatest man about him, is a fellow of no more sobriety than to fight about a mistress.
[Pepys 1668]

No such detail, or comment, could ever be countenanced by the Gazette. Pepys is unfair when he describes the newspaper and its editor as having 'pleased me to have it demonstrated, that a purser without professed cheating is a professed loser, twice as much as he gets'. By definition, the Gazette was writing for a mass audience and with strict limits on how it could go about this, unlike Pepys and his private diary. Nonetheless, what is not said about duels is as revealing as what is. In addition, reporting foreign duels with such regularity suggests a clear audience for such content.

In that sense, therefore, newspaper coverage of duelling in this era is both revealing and yet ambiguous. Revealing, in that it demonstrates a clear interest in duels, at least amongst readers of the Gazette, and the elaborate ways in which the newspaper met those needs whilst staying within the boundaries of propriety. Yet, it is ambiguous in that the

duels themselves are left undeveloped. The reader is invited to provide the rest of the details with their Restoration-era imaginations and points of reference that are not so self-evident to a reader in the early 21st Century. From the perspective of martial arts history, these sources are useful in that they document incidences of duelling and how society responded to them, in conjunction with other primary evidence, such as letters, official documents and testimonies. Yet they are in and of themselves simple outlines where a more detailed picture is needed.

TWILIGHT OF THE SWORDS

There is, however, one exception to this pattern. Published in 1662, before the Gazette's more censorious approach, a news story in the *Mercurius Publicus* covered a particularly fierce duel in Denmark:

Colonel Holk Commander of Cronenburg a Dane, and Colonel Capel of the Province of Galderland came hither last week; they fell out with one another and came to blows but were hindered to go any further; but the case of their coming hither was to fight a Duel. Yesterday they went out with their seconds two or three miles off from hence, a quarter of a mile beyond the Town of Daerdorp, belonging to the Prince of Saxon Lowenburg, having shaketh hands with one another, and some words passing between them, they pulled off their Coats and Doublets taking a Pistol in one hand and the Sword in the other, they went on foot asunder about forty paces, and then approaching to one another six paces they gave fire upon one another; Colonel Capel received a shot under the arme in the side... The Commander... was dangerously wounded. The Corps of the Colonel was brother hither this morning, above two hundred persons went thither from hence to see the Duel. [Mercurius Publicus, 12 June 1662-19 June 1662, issue 24]

What is significant is what they use to fight the duel with. In one hand, they wield a sword, as might be expected, but in the other, they carry a pistol, and it is the latter which is used to conduct the duel, both men being out of range to fight at close quarters, and the duel itself being decided with both men gravely wounded, perhaps fatally.

What this news story does is demonstrate a turning point in the history of English and European martial arts. Firearms were increasingly overshadowing sword arts and this is the point where this becomes particularly evident. That is not to say that firearms were a new invention or unknown on the battlefield. Arguably, their first known deployment on British soil, albeit in a crude form, was at the 1461 Battle of Towton [BBC News Online 2010; Sutherland 2011: 13], while the

English Civil War saw the ratio of musket first match and then exceed pikes [Atkin 2004: 15-16; Latzko 1993: 470-484]. By 1660, firearms were increasingly dominant weapons.

This is not to say that pikes or swords vanished into the aether there and then. In 1659, a Lieutenant Colonel of the London militia, William Kiffin, co-authored a letter complaining at the treatment meted out to both him and other officers after they were accused of being Anabaptists by a pamphlet. After the allegations were made, the houses of the accused officers were searched and, as Kiffin observes, alongside drums, firearms and swords, fifteen pikes are seized [Kiffin 1659].

What the content of Kiffin and his compatriots' rather eclectic arsenals demonstrate, however, was that the progression from 'pike and shotte' to mainly 'shotte' was uneven; warfare was in flux, and pikes still lingered on in the British armoury until 1702 [Falkner 2014: 115-116], when the Duke of Marlborough did away with them, his battlefield tactics and the socket bayonet having finally rendered them obsolete [Black 1994: 111-113; Manning 2007: 691]. Even by 1670, according to *The Cry of Innocent Blood...*, a polemic written by Robert Allen, appalling cruelty was dished out to Quakers by 'red coats' both with muskets and pikes, and on horseback, though a great deal of the violence involves either the butts of pistols and muskets, or the threat of shootings [Allen 1670].

This shift would nonetheless gather pace during the 1660-1670 period, as news coverage shows. Mostly, it was in the form of reported deaths by musketfire, such as the death of Admiral Van Hurst during a sea battle in 1666 [Current Intelligence, 18 June 1666-21 June 1666], or the death of a boatswain shot 'through the neck, of which hurt he immediately died' in another naval altercation [London Gazette, 18 July 1670-21 July 1670, Issue 488], or the injuring through shot visited upon the captain and '6 or 7' of the crew of the *Drake* in 1665 [Intelligencer Published for the Satisfaction and Information of the People, 14 August 1665, Issue 63].

The situation ashore was no safer. A Visier was reported shot in the head during a siege in 1668, 'but how dangerous we yet know not' [London Gazette, 10 September 1668-14 September 1668, Issue 295]. Meanwhile a 1660 clash between the 'Regimen of Artois' and 'a battalion landed from the Galleys of Maltha' put Ottoman forces to flight with 'such a showre of bullets, that many fell upon the place' [Parliamentary Intelligencer, 10 December 1660-17 December 17 1660, Issue 51].

Reports of injuries and deaths by gunfire are remarkably common in newspapers at this time – though usually from abroad. Interestingly,

however, volleys of shot had also become an accepted way of saluting a dignitary in Britain, as the newspapers would often report, such as that provided by the Edinburgh militia in 1666 for visiting and local dignitaries, 'expressing an Infinite Zeal and Chearfulness to serve his Majesty and their Country on any publick occasion' [London Gazette, 13 September 1666-17 September 1666, Issue 87].

The rest of this news story is interesting in that it demonstrates how the use of guns was fast becoming standard practice; no mention of pikes or swords is given. Other examples of musket salutes demonstrate a similar pattern, such as that which received one Colonel Rossiter when he inspected his Lincolnshire troops in 1660, 'who received him with many expressions of satisfaction and several volleys of Shot' [Parliamentary Intelligencer, 2 April 1660-9 April 1660, Issue 15, 240].

When reports of battles are made, the only other force mentioned, time and again, are cavalry, which, as the English Civil War demonstrated, was the best way to counter musketeers at close quarters, though it often required combined arms to ensure this: 'About this time Monsieur de Bauveze advanc'd with a Squadron of Horse beyond a Wood, to make a discovery of the Post, receiving many Shot, and having divers of his Cavaliers wounded in the Attempt' [Intelligencer, 22 August 1664, Issue 67]. Newspaper coverage of Venner's Uprising confirms this trend:

The Colonel (John Corbet) took onely twenty horse, and coming to Woodstreet found the Rebels in a very narrow place, where horse without much difficulty could not approach to do service. Howsoever with nine of his twenty he gallantly charged the Rebels (for the truth is, those that charged were no more) and brose those Rebellious Blunderbussers, so as the foot had little to do but to pursue the Rebels now they were broken. [Kingdomes Intelligencer, London, England, 7 January 1661-14 January 1661, Issue 2]

Cavalry tactics also had an effect on criminal activity in Britain and elsewhere. Highwaymen were a growing problem [Picard 2004: 233], but contrary to the modern public image, these robbers often hunted in packs, sometimes of very great size. In 1669, the London Gazette reported a series of robberies between Naples and Rome, carried out by '120 banditi' on horseback [London Gazette, 29 April 1669-3 May 1669, Issue 361], but the press also reported similar cases in Britain, such as the nine 'well hosted and armed' highwaymen committed for trial in Ilchester after 'confessing a Designe' to rob the house of a wealthy woman [London Gazette, 28 February 1667-4 March 1667, Issue 135]. In 1660, Sir William Grove was robbed in his Berkshire home by seven men on horseback, all armed with pistols [Mercurius Publicus

Comprising the Sum of Forraign Intelligence, 23 August 1660-30 August 1660, Issue 35], while in 1666, a merchant's apprentice reported Carlisle had been attacked by up to 250 horsemen [London Gazette, November 22, 1666 – November 26, 1666; Issue 107]. A particularly dramatic case, meanwhile, unfolded in 1662:

The Prosecutors preferred two Bills of Indictment against them, one for the Robbery, another for the murder, and were very eager in the Prosecution... That these five Gentlemen going that day to Waltham to accompany one Mr Vaughn in his journey towards the North, in their return met with one [unintelligible] and one [unintelligible] [who] told them they were rob'd by four persons who had taken away ten pounds from them, and were before on the road, and desired those five Gentlemen to persue them, and they thereupon made hast, and in their pursuit towards London met one Goddard, who likewise told them that those four thieves had robbed him and were before upon the road... and riding still on in the pursuit of the Theeves with their swords drawn. [Kingdomes Intelligencer, 7 April 1662-14 April 1662, Issue 15]

Time and again, we see the same pattern – weight of numbers, firearms or horses, or a combination thereof. Such an approach to violence, while echoing the influence of military tactics of the time, also hinted at a certain de-skilling of the martial arts at this point. If you could ride a horse – as many could – aim a pistol and have enough of your friends at your side, the skill requirements would, of course, now be much lower. If duels and fencing masters ensured the art of swordfighting continued, it was increasingly overshadowed by the gun. Why learn to use a sword when it takes a much shorter time to load and fire a pistol?

Newspaper coverage of Venner's Rising in 1661 confirms this trend:

After this, the Rebels were pursued to the end of Moor-lane, where seven of them unable to fly farther, betook themselves to an House, where though they were summoned they stood out, till Lieutenant Lambert [...] got some Musketeers of the Trained-Bands into the next room to the Rebels, who refusing to yield, the Trained-Bands fired, and the Rebels did the like, till four of them were kill'd, and the fiff lay for dead, and yet the other two refused to submit, until the Lieutenant untiled [?] the room and got in amongst them, and then they cried Quarter for Jesus sake; but while he was dis-arming them, the fifth that lay for dead snapt a Pistol (loaden with a Slug) at the Lieutenant, who thereupon run him through, and brought forth the other two prisoners. [Kingdomes Intelligencer, 7 January 1661-14 January 1661, Issue 2, 24]

This is the only specific reference in the story to any sword fighting. Indeed, the story continually details the use of firearms on both sides, such as exchanges of fire and deaths and injuries caused by gunshot wounds. Lieutenant Lambert only got to use his sword when his opponents were unable to fire and on the brink of defeat. Guns, not swords, had brought an end to Venner's Rising.

Firearms were also increasingly used by criminals on foot. In 1664, one of L'Estrange's news books reported the murder of a Portuguese merchant at the pistol point of his manservant [Newes Published for Satisfaction and Information of the People, 24 March 1664, Issue 24]. Another story in the same year, also published in the Newes, told of the daughter of a Kentish noblewoman, shot en route to church by an assailant who fled the scene [Sutherland 1986: 97]. In a more benign fashion, guns had entered day-to-day parlance as metaphors. For example, Robert Hooke's 1665 study of nature through microscopes, *Micrographia*, described the bursting of a heated bladder as having 'almost made me deaf for the present, and much surpassed the noise of a musket' [Hooke 1665].

Another sign of the ascent of guns, however, was the cultural backlash against them. This was not due to them being used to kill people, however. Instead, as the woman of letters, Margaret Cavendish, argued, the problem with guns was a matter, quite literally, of class:

For Shooting is not a direct Fighting, because they must stand at some Distance to take Aim, which in my opinion appears Cowardly, to Pelt at each other, as if they were Afraid to come near each other; besides, a Child may have so much Skill and Courage as to shoot off a Pistol, and may chance to Kill a Man, but a Child cannot tell how to use a Sword, or manage a Horse; also a Peasant or such mean bred Persons, can shoot off Pistols, or Carbines, or Muskets, but they have no skill to use a Sword, nor know not how to manage an Horse, unless a Cart-Horse.
[Cavendish 1664: 143-144]

In other words, Cavendish saw that guns, in effect, democratised violence and suggested a threat not only to the established order but its cultural expectations and traditions. While the blithe snobbery of Cavendish's rhetoric is certainly evident, it is not without context. Written only four years after the Restoration, and three years after the Venner Uprising, and by someone with first hand experience of both the Civil War and exile to France, her contempt for the common man, or 'clown', with his 'carbines or muskets', is rooted in a genuine concern. The kingdom was insecure and instability an ongoing and very real threat, as the angry protests outside her husband's London mansion after the 1667 Medway Raid made only too clear [Sutherland 1986: 98].

Instead, Cavendish argued not only for the cultural supremacy of the sword, and indeed the Swordsman, but also that it still retained its relevance and effectiveness as a weapon of war, primarily in close combat against unarmed infantry.

As for Foot Commanders, they must Chiefly, if not only, Practise the Use of the Sword, for it is the Sword that makes the greatest Execution; for though neither Horse nor Sword is either Defensive or Offensive against Canon Bullets, they are both Usefull against Bodies of men; for all sorts of Bullets, either from Canons, Muskets, or Pistols will Miss ten times for Hitting once, whereas an Army when Joyning so close as to Fight Hand to Hand, the Sword is the Chief and Prime Executor, insomuch, that a Sword Skilfully or Artificially Used, hat the Advantage over the Strength of Clowns or their Clubs, or the But-ends of their Muskets [...] for by the fore-mentioned arts [including 'the management of his Horse'] you will make a great Slaughter, and a Quicker Dispatch to Victory, and Gain a great Renown or Game to each Particular Person, that are so well Bred or Taught to be Horse-men and Sword-men.
[Cavendish 1662]

Cavendish was, of course, far too optimistic about the usefulness of the sword against massed musketry and weight of numbers, clowns notwithstanding. Tellingly, however, she does also argue for the supremacy of cavalry, and in that regard at least, Cavendish demonstrated some understanding of the new dynamics of war that would continue, to varying degrees, until World War One. It is also worth noting that Cavendish would later write a glowing account of her husband's exploits in the English Civil War, alongside his great and effective reliance on muskets and cannons during that conflict, with nary a hint of irony [Cavendish 1667: 143]. In that sense, of course, Cavendish had no issue with firearms so long as the right sort were in control of them. Even an idealist like her could admit, albeit indirectly, that times have moved on.

A further confirmation of this change in the dynamics of British martial arts was written several decades after the era covered by this article. Swordmaster William Hope's 1691 fencing treatise, *The Sword Man's Vade Mecum*, both echoes Cavendish's criticism and uses similar rhetoric:

But suppose they should openly reflect upon him, and undervalue his Art, by threatening him with that unanswerable defence, as they think of their Ignorance, and infallible Defeater of all Art (I mean by ingaging him to fight

with a Pistol, or other such like Fire weapons) and indeed to hear some People talk, one would think that by their gaining this one point, of engaging a Sword-man to fight with Fire-arnes, they make no doubt, but all will go well with them, and that the day is certainly their own... Such discourse as this is but too common amongst Ignorants, and they think when they talk at this rate, they have found the Philosopher Stone, which in place of turning every thing into Gold, can turn all their Ignorance into the profoundest Art and Skill, and all skilful Persons, Art, and Judgement into the greatest Ignorance.
[Hope 1691]

Hope does, nonetheless, make concessions to the point, noting that 'no Man will be so foolish, as to pretend to parie the shot of a Pistol', qualifying this with a claim that there are ways to 'shun a shot', but that he does not think it 'fit at present to mention'. Unable to completely argue for the supremacy of the sword against the gun, therefore, Hope instead tries to equivocate that only expert shots can exceed the swordsman, and that since the weapons are so different, the point is essentially moot:

So that the only way to end this Debate, is, that they either fight with Weapons altogether unknown to both, or ... propose a Barrel of Gun-powder should be brought to each, in the middle of which, they were to place themselves, and then with fired Matches to try who could most Manfully, or I may rather say Madly blow up the other.
[Hope 1691]

In Hope's work, we see defiance but also a barely admitted resignation. The musket and the pistol, alongside the horse and the bayonet, were the future of warfare and the sword would be relegated to a sign of rank for military officers. Meanwhile, duellists from the 18th century onwards set aside the sword for the pistol [Shoemaker 2002: 528] before mounting criticism and social/cultural shifts ended duels altogether in the 19th century [Shoemaker 2002: 545]. As the newspapers of the 1660-1670 period amply demonstrate, journalism was not so much recording the nature of duelling at the time, but the beginning of its end, and an existential challenge to British martial arts themselves. The gun had prevailed over the sword.

CONCLUSION

As this article has shown, newspaper and media archives are effective sources of historical information in regards to the martial arts. What they reveal, however, is not always what we may expect. While the theme of the paper was 'News of the Duels', it is also, in hindsight, a demonstration that Restoration Britain's martial arts were as subject to disruption as any other aspect of life at the time, including the press. Naturally, there is a need for caution in regards to these sources. As L'Estrange demonstrates, their bias was integral. We must also be aware of how terms of reference change over time – if newspapers and newsbooks of the time did not cover duels in great detail, this may be as much down to readers' common knowledge as censoriousness on the part of the reporters. For example, for us, karate needs no introduction or description, though a 17th century reader would beg to differ.

The article's focus on newspapers also means other media at the time, omitted for reasons of space, still await further investigation. While newsbook coverage of martial arts have been explored somewhat, a deeper study is needed. Handwritten newsletters, as produced on the side by newspaperman Henry Muddiman [Griffiths 2006: 13], when he wasn't working for L'Estrange and, latterly, the London Gazette, would also be illuminating, not least because they were more detailed and far less censored. Meanwhile, the Bills of Mortality, while mentioned in passing, would be a valid area of research, if only to see how Londoners may have killed each other. The article has also referred to non-journalistic texts from the period; they are a rich source of further information, as the works of Lady Cavendish, Richard Allestree and Samuel Pepys are any yardstick.

While the press was limited in what it could report by the Licensing Act, there was a brief hiatus between 1679 and 1685, and the law itself was finally refused renewal by Parliament in 1695. How was violence of any stripe recorded during these times, and how much more revealing are they from a martial arts studies perspective? Foreign newspapers from the period, such as Dutch and German publications, could also provide an outsider's perspective on British violence at the time, skilled or otherwise.

Finally, I hope this article will be of use to martial artists themselves. While fencing manuals from the period are standard texts, other sources offer further information. HEMA practitioners may wish to consider how cavalry tactics and blackpowder warfare, supported by swords and bayonets, can be recreated and taught (preferably without the live fire) from the material given here and in the archives themselves. The study of newspapers offers a new source of material as to how fighting not only took place but was perceived by those alive at the time. What is clear is that a great deal can be learned not just through the practice of the time but also by considering how the populace at large chose to read all about it afterwards.

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