

A Sampling of Smallsword Resources

by Terry Gruber

(Source availability references as of July 2019)

These are listed in the order first written/published

“TAG Notes” are some of my personal thoughts etc. In general, I did not find fencing books useful in learning how to fence but after I had trained under a number of instructors and had gained some experience, the books were helpful in giving perspective and introducing additional concepts and ideas. As far as historical sources, Smallsword books tend to have more detail and information than most books and manuscripts from earlier periods so there is less need for “interpretation”. The books prefixed with an “*” I have read in their entirety and are the ones I most often revisit.

* The Art of Fencing, or the use of the Smallsword

L'Abbat, 1696, *Translated from French by Andrew Mahon, 1734*

(Note, some versions have an intro by Mahon and some don't; also, some have pictures and some don't - can sometimes be found for free, a version of the physical book is available from Amazon, electronic versions available on Amazon and

<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/12135>)

TAG Notes: This is my first and the earliest Smallsword book I have. I have also run across references to Abbat in other books. I find Andrew Mahon's preface particularly interesting.

A New, Short and Easy Method of Fencing

William Hope, 1707, English

(Physical book is available from Amazon,

Web version + link to EPUB: <https://linacreschoolofdefence.org/Library/Hope/NewMethod/>)

TAG Notes: I like Hope's basic concept here of focusing on and becoming proficient in a relatively small number of actions to obtain overall effectiveness in a much shorter period of time than studying the common French system. However, I find Hope's writing excessively verbose and have only read parts of his works. An additional note, the earliest references to “priority/ROW” to be used in fencing in the salle that I have seen are in an earlier Hope book published in 1693.

Expert Sword-man's Companion

Donald McBane, 1728, English

(Physical book, a new transcription by Jared Kerby 2017, is available from Amazon)

TAG Notes: By his own words and by other indications, it appears that McBane has had experience in a number of military encounters and many duels - so in that regard, I find his advice in his general directions to be especially interesting.

The Art of the Smallsword

From Girard's Treatise of Arms, 1740, Translated from French by Philip Crawley, 2014

(Physical book is available from Amazon)

TAG Notes: Many consider this an important Smallsword book. The parts of this book I find interesting is where Girard discusses the use of the Smallsword versus a variety of other weapons. I have also fenced and received some Smallsword instruction from Kevin Cote who contributed some essays that form much of the modern introduction to Girard's book.

The Army and Navy Gentleman's Companion ...

John MacArthur, 1780, English

(PDF: https://smallswordproject.files.wordpress.com/2018/02/mcarthur1780_ptcpj_18.pdf

Physical book is available from Amazon)

TAG Notes: This book is fairly frequently referenced by some modern Smallsword practitioners.

*** The School of Fencing with a General Explanation ... of the Art**

Dominico/Henry Angelo, 1787, English - This book was originally written in French. The version I have seems to be Henry's translation/interpretation of his father's (Domenico) work.

(PDF:

http://www.hroarr.com/manuals/sabre-cutlass-broadsword-rapier/Angelo_-_School_of_Fencing.pdf

Modern transcriptions and Reproductions of the physical book can be found - prices vary)

TAG Notes: The School of Angelo was an important fencing school that existed for over 100 years in London in the 18th and 19th centuries. This book has better illustrations than most and is a good representation of Smallsword fencing of the period.

The Art of Fencing Reduced to True Principles

J.J. de St Martin, 1804, Translated from French by Philip Crawley, 2014

(Physical book available from Lulu books)

TAG Notes: I obtained this book as an additional, later perspective on Smallsword and because it included a section on Sabre. I had met Victor Markland who wrote the introduction to this translation and who had managed the American Smallsword Symposium.

The Sword and the Centuries, or Old Sword Days and Old Sword Ways

Alfred Hutton, 1901, English

(Physical book - used versions only, can be gotten via Amazon)

TAG Notes: Hutton is a recognized fencing instructor and historian in the late 19th century. This book is useful in giving some context and examples of serious affairs involving a wide variety of swords over many eras, at least from a Victorian perspective - only a small part is devoted to the Smallsword.

*** A Modern Manual of Smallsword Fencing**

Martin J. Dougherty, 2015, English

(Only Kindle version available from Amazon)

TAG Notes: Dougherty indicates his basis is Angelo but as the title implies, this is a modern book on Smallsword fencing written in modern vernacular - this is the most readable of all my Smallsword books. The contents of this book just feel right to me. The only negatives are the lack of a table of contents and no illustrations.