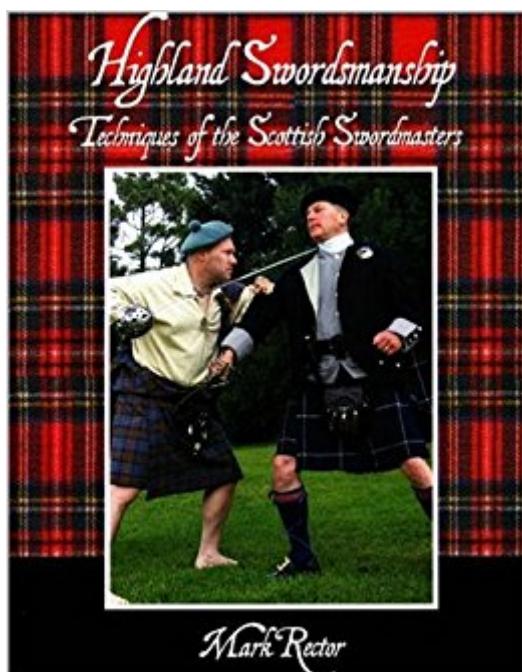


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Highland Swordsmanship: Techniques Of The Scottish Sword Masters



Synopsis

Scotland has a long and proud tradition of swordsmanship, something that is abundantly documented in its medieval literature. This publication reproduces two classic manuals of swordsmanship, both written in the early 18th century. The 'Expert Sword-Man's Companion' written by Donald McBane and 'New Methods of Fencing' written by Sir William Hope in 1707, both contain advice on the theory of swordplay, as well as technical and ethical issues and the realities of fighting. In this book Rector adds the necessary background material and the California Players re-enact many of the techniques discussed.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Mark Rector is an actor, playwright, stage combatant and fight choreographer, as well as a student and practitioner of historical swordplay. He is the translator and editor of Medieval Combat, Hans Talhoffer's Fechtbuch ("Fight Book") of 1467.

This book is a wonderful resource for writers or re-enactors. It pays ode to the romanticising of Scottish fighters such as Rob Roy, Wallace, The Bruce and Bonnie Prince Charlie, but goes past these legendary images to show you the reasons for certain practices. It covers the basics of offence and defence, especially in the fencing techniques of the 17th through 19th centuries. I do wish I would have covered the medieval aspects of Highland swordsmanship: The Claymore. The movements for using the longest two handed sword is wonderful to see in action, so I had hoped this book would cover that. Lots of diagrams and photos so the non fencer can follow precisely what

they are demonstrating. Very detailed in who did what in duels, the protocol and history. All in all a very good work.

Not quite what I expected.

Very interesting material packed with the original fencing treatises.

To help counterbalance the misleading review from October, 2005, this is a terrific book on swordsmanship. The costuming might not be completely accurate, but that's hardly the point of the book. One would be hard-pressed to argue against the text of the manuals themselves, as they were written in period, at least one of them by a man (Donald MacBane) who had to rely repeatedly for his very life upon the skills set forth in the manual. The interpretations of the authors seem spot on with the text. Overall, I would say that this is an excellent introduction to the ways in which the basket-hilted broad- and backswords were actually used in mortal combat. I hardly think the editors were unaware that a "Highlander" was a "Scottish Gael." The simple fact is that the manuals contained in this book were written by lowland scots, and the "Highland" in the title is used for marketing. If you own or are thinking of getting a baskethilt, chances are you've either already purchased or are planning to purchase the kilt to go with it; simply put, "Highlanders" sell nowadays (if you need help deciding what sort of kilt would be most appropriate, the review I've mentioned lists several good sources for info). "Lowland Swordsmanship" just doesn't have the same ring to it. The fact that these were lowland scots also explains the quotes in scots sprinkled throughout the book. That these passages are in scots and not gaelic is hardly an "omission;" they're as gaelic as the authors of the period texts they're printed with. Which is to say, not at all. To fault this book because it doesn't contain little snippets in the language most common to the geography of the title, or because the reenactors wear the wrong clothing, is as absurd as faulting a cookbook filled with good recipes because the china patterns in the pictures aren't right. Is it an accurate observation? Sure. But it has absolutely nothing to do with the purpose of the book. It's a book on swordsmanship, not linguistics or costuming, and as a book on swordsmanship, it's quite good. "Highland Swordsmanship" is well worth both purchasing and studying, as is the sequel, "Highland Broadsword," and I hope there are more volumes by these folks in the works. I'd give it six stars if I could.

Mark Rector has put together an interesting volume that serves both as a historical reference to old

Scottish swordplay, and a guide to those individuals interested in the recreation of old styles of sword combat. Happily, it is also easy to read, and nicely illustrated. As the author of "THE ART AND SCIENCE OF FENCING," "THE INNER GAME OF FENCING," and "THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE SWORD," and the editor/publisher of "FENCERS QUARTERLY MAGAZINE," I recommend this book.

This book is a wonderful representation of two old Scottish sword manuals. The information is abundant and clear. These works deal primarily with the small sword, the most commonly carried sword at that time; however, many of the Scottish weapons are represented. Well written with good illustrations, I highly recommend this book.

I have two problems with this book however meritorious the descriptions of swordsmanship. The enactors are frequently pictured wearing a 'little kilt' (fÃ"ileadh beag) with knife-edge pleats to portray Highland dress of the mid-eighteenth century. During the period of the 1745 rebellion, the 'big kilt' (fÃ"ileadh-mÃ'r) was essentially a large blanket rolled about the body and belted in the middle. There was no flat apron in the front and the kilt didn't necessarily open on right side. The standardization of the modern kilt is due to regulations of Highland regiments in the 19th/20th centuries. I suggest anyone interested in the topic read: Hugh Cheape's 'Tartan', J. Telfer Dunbar's 'History of Highland Dress', Christian Hesketh's 'Tartans', or McClintock' & Dunbar's 'Old Irish and Highland Dress'. The editor seems to be unaware that 'Highlander' is synonymous with 'Scottish Gael'; that is, the first language of Highlanders is Gaelic, not Scots English. The book would have been enriched with quotes from J.L. Campbell's 'Highland Songs of the Forty-Five', contemporary Jacobite songs in the original Gaelic with English translations, or Ronald Black's 'An Lasair', also bilingual.

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