

The fighting cane pt 1 - the basics

CANE FIGHTING – a catch-all term describing *Bartitsu*, *Canne de Combat* and others – is a defensive martial art developed in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th Century. Popularly associated with **EW Barton-Wright** (hence *Bartitsu*) and Sherlock Holmes, the art has remained somewhat dormant for most of the 20th Century, but is lately experiencing a revival.

The technique is not dissimilar to single-handed sword, but typically involves the whole body – hands, arms, legs, etc – and quickly becomes different when a hooked cane is introduced.

In this lesson we will look at the basics of cane position for straight cane, a few of the common defensive postures and some basic strikes.

Remember that canes are usually inflexible and quite hard, so take care to moderate your speed and intent and make sure you have appropriate protective gear.

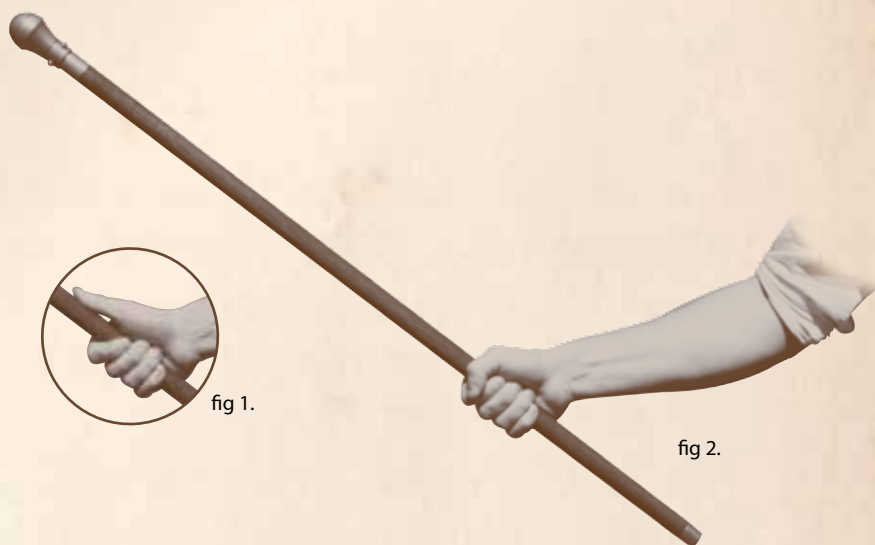


fig 1.

fig 2.

Hand position and cane balance.

Position your dominant hand approximately one quarter of the way along the cane shaft with the cane-head on the end farthest from your body. Keep your arms and shoulders as relaxed as possible. A word on thumb position: extended along the shaft gives you extra control in a thrust or a guard (fig 1.)

however you should leave it wrapped around for strikes. (fig 2.) It is worth noting also at this point that the balance of the cane in this position will be significantly different to that of a single-handed sword and therefore that the intended point of impact shifts to the tip of the cane.



fig 4.

fig 3.

fig 5.

Defensive positions.

Stand with your feet approximately shoulder-width apart and your dominant foot about half a pace forward. Position your arm above your head with your dominant hand at about the same distance forward as your front foot. (fig 3.) Position your off-hand wherever you feel most comfortable, but be aware that we will use it later, so don't wrap it up around yourself or hold it behind your body.

The cane will slope downwards naturally – try to keep the head in line with your opponents face or chest. Staying relaxed will help to keep some spring in your knees and elbows and will make quick changes of position easier. While this position does lend itself more toward overhand strikes you should not feel limited to these.

A lower defensive posture can be achieved by lowering your master hand to about the level of your hips or waist. Cane-head position will change naturally, but it should still be directed towards the centre of your opponent's mass. (fig 4.)

Against downward strikes at your head adopt a position with the cane in line with your shoulders. Move your off-hand to support the cane, but do not close your hand around it – doing so invites broken fingers. (fig 5.)

exercise 1

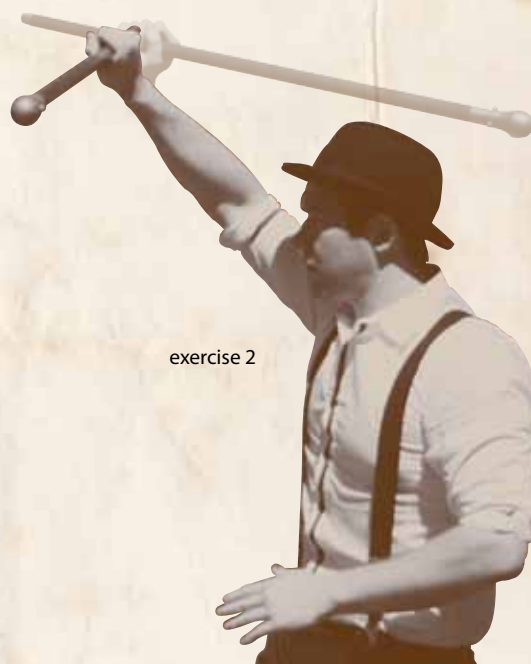


Basic attacks/Wrist Exercises.

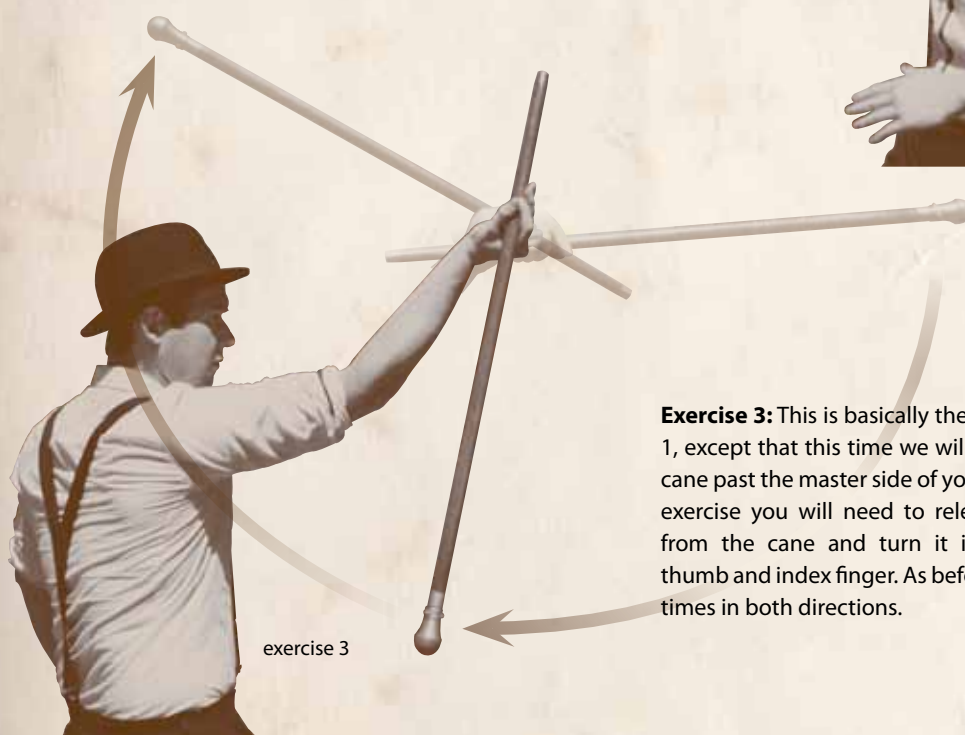
Exercise 1: From the high guard position move the cane past your off side hip and around in a circle past your shoulder. This action should be performed solely in the wrist, though if you need to you can allow a little movement in your elbow. With these actions you are aiming for speed rather than power. Perform this action a few times then reverse direction.

Exercise 2: Starting again from a high guard, move the cane back towards your head on your off side, sweep it over your head and continue in a circular arc until you reach your starting position. Again – this action should be done for speed and should rotate around the wrist. Repeat a few times and then reverse direction.

exercise 2



exercise 3



Exercise 3: This is basically the same as exercise 1, except that this time we will be swinging the cane past the master side of your body. With this exercise you will need to release your fingers from the cane and turn it in between your thumb and index finger. As before repeat several times in both directions.