

# KENDO FORUM

by Musashi of the Shinto Ryu.



The Shinto-Ryu Training Week, our second, took place from the 26th May to 3rd June amid the rolling hills and the long beaches of Charmouth in Dorset. Six members spent a most strenuous week—probably to the amazement of the local inhabitants to whom the sight of six well-armed gentlemen in full Kendo outfit must have come as something of a shock. Besides a full programme of kata, exercises, theory and keiko, we took the opportunity of shooting some of a 16 mm. film of Kendo—camera-men Peter Parsons and Roald Knutson. Since this week has proved such a success we intend to institute it as an annual event open to more members, the change of scenery seems to do everyone a great deal of good—despite being dragged out of bed at the crack of

dawn (5.45 a.m.) to do two hours hard fencing on a cold deserted beach!

The long-awaited consignment of shinai has now arrived from Japan for the information of members not in frequent contact with us. A further large order of equipment both personal and club is proposed for the end of July. Catalogues and price lists with the Secretary. (Members and Associates only.)

We left Musashi about to start his greatest and final fight with Sasaki Ganryu on the island of Nadajima off the coast of Buzen Province.

"Come, let's to it," said Musashi as he drew his swords. The fight commenced: but with two such wary fencers there was little action

at the first as they keenly scrutinised each other's movements. After a few minutes Ganryu aimed a cut at Musashi's head, this was received on the latter's crossed swords, and for a while the two men stood quite still; Ganryu being fully aware that if he withdrew his sword he would give his opponent the advantage. But Musashi saw no use in maintaining this attitude for long, so, removing his upper sword, he aimed a blow at Ganryu's head, which was instantly received. There followed a succession of cuts and parries, feints and flourishes, advances and retreats, both men acting with great coolness and caution. This continued for about an hour, when the combatants being somewhat fatigued, a drum sounded, and officers came and separated them by placing a long pole between them. They ate and drank a little water while doctors attended to the minor cuts sustained during this first half of the battle.

Musashi resolved to put into effect the secret teachings of the great Bokuden for he was aware that unless he did so he could not win. Consequently on the renewal of the contest Musashi, retreating to the further end of the area, approached Ganryu with flourishes of the sword and gestures that the latter had never before seen. Ganryu was forced unwittingly to retreat. When near the edge of the ring, Musashi dealt a blow at Ganryu's head. Avoiding this, Ganryu resorted to his famous somersault, the tsubame-gaeshi, and cut at Musashi's legs as he descended. This was a new technique to Musashi but his quick eye saw the sword coming and he just

*The illustration depicts Ganryu cutting off a portion of Musashi's hakama. In the background sits Kuroda Nagamasa and his retainers. The spectators are confined to the moored boats.*

managed to leap the cut; but even so a small portion of his hakama was cut off, so that he was within an inch or two of losing a leg. Ganryu was disheartened by the failure of the trick on which he had placed so much store. It is particularly in fencing that any slight depression of spirits in one of the combatants gives his adversary an immediate advantage. The failure of his somersault and the novelty and peculiarity of Musashi's new movements had produced loss of spirits in Ganryu. This was the embryo, as it were, of his defeat. The relaxation of his attention soon revealed itself in his failure to ward off a slashing stroke dealt at his forehead by Musashi with his left-hand sword. The gash inflicted brought the blood streaming into his eyes and prevented his seeing distinctly what his adversary was doing. Ganryu did his best up to the last, but presently he received a severe cut extending from the left shoulder to the centre of the chest: he fell, never more to rise.

Following ancient custom, Musashi stood across the fallen body and, as he thrust his sword through Ganryu's throat, said: "Witness, O spirit of Munisai, that I have slain your murderer!" Then deliberately cutting off his head, Musashi took it to the officials in charge, and said: "I beg that you will give me permission to take this head to the tomb of my deceased parent." The request was granted.

Kuroda Nagamasa despatched messengers to Kumamoto to inform Lord Kato of what had been done, and Buzayemon was immediately sent to Kokura to thank Nagamasa for the kindness shown to Kiyomasa's retainer.

Musashi now lost no time in taking the head to Hiroshima. While he was there he was invited to become a retainer of Mori Terumoto, but he respectfully declined

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The city of Rennes provided us with an excellent dinner which enabled us to meet other members of the club.

We met again at the Rennes Club the following morning and went sight-seeing and shopping, the afternoon we devoted to practice and many useful tips and opinions were passed during this period.

We arrived at the Paul-Bert Stadium at 8 o'clock and watched the Rennes junior section under the supervision of M. Gerard (1st Kyu) demonstrate Ukemi and exercises. When we had changed for our contest we were individually introduced to the Rennes City officials and exchanged medals with our French opponents.

The French team, consisting of six 1st Dans were captained by Alain Daisy, the referee being M. Villiman (3rd Dan). The first contest was marred by Mike Squance (3rd Kyu) breaking his arm. He had been fighting well and had caused his opponent many anxious moments with his strong attacking.

Exeter's best contest was the second in which G. Scovell (1st Kyu) beat B. Cheral (1st Dan) with a magnificent Hari-goshi.

In the third contest T. Hellier (2nd Kyu) was beaten decisively by J. Hirel with Hane-goshi and L. Ford (1st Kyu) suffered a similar fate though attacking hard with Seoi-nage. The fifth contest, K. Browse (1st Kyu) did well against a bigger opponent and deservedly drew.

The highlight was the contest between the two captains, Alain Daisy and Exeter's only 1st Dan, Peter Murphy. Peter stumbled Alain with several hard attacks one of which brought both to the ground. Murphy getting in quickly with Kami-shiho-gatame making, we thought, a point for Exeter, but surprise, while Murphy adjusted his hold, the Frenchman turned him reversing the position, holding him for a full point.

We had a second contest, fighting equivalent grades and Exeter won 4—2 with P. Murphy and G. Scovell scoring decisive wins to the delight of the French crowd.

It was with great surprise to the French when, at the finish Exeter's president, J. Bricknell (1st Kyu) made M. Villiman and M. Cheval, president and vice-president of the Exeter club.

Our remaining time was spent sightseeing and visiting all the local places of interest. The climax to the visit came on Sunday when all the Exeter sportsmen were given a civic dinner at the Guildhall with the Rennes city officials.

Our thoughts during the flight home must have been, without doubt, what a wonderful stay we had in Rennes and we sincerely thank our hosts for the excellent hospitality which was extended to us.

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and returned to Kumamoto in Kyushu. Later in his life he went on a further warrior-pilgrimage. The date of his death is given as 19th May, 1645, but as to the length of his life the authorities disagree, some affirming that he died

at the age of 94. As I said in the last issue, he is famed as an artist, greatly influenced by the applied teachings of Zen Buddhism; his nom-de-plume was "Niten". His remains lie in Kumamoto, in the Hommyoji Cemetery.