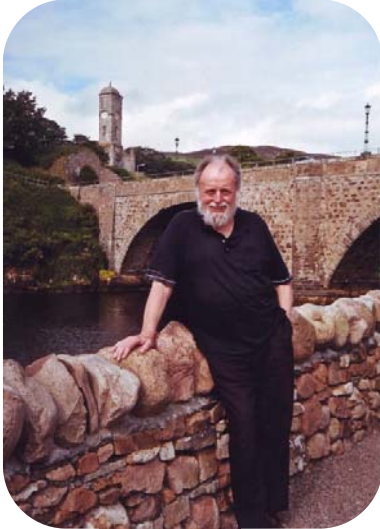


OP Memories – Roald Knutsen (1945)



Living by the pen and the sword

The following article was kindly contributed by Roald Knutsen OP

My experience of The Perse spanned the entire length of World War II; the first four years in the Junior School in Bateman Street and the last two years in the old senior school in the centre of Cambridge. The war coming to an end meant that my family returned to Boreham Wood, and I continued my education at Watford Grammar, one of the older endowed schools, also with an excellent teaching record.

The war years were very interesting for me as I lived with my grandparents in Cambridge where my grandfather was for a period a headmaster. My father was a lieutenant in the Royal Norwegian Navy, commanding the 'Djerve', a woodclad minesweeper destroying magnetic mines – often by rifle fire! He was forced to scuttle the 'Djerve' in Sogne Fjord to prevent her capture when the Germans invaded Norway in April 1940.

Eventually, after covertly serving with the Norwegian Resistance, he and my mother (English) made their escape, to Sweden in January 1943 and reached England soon after. My father then served in some highly secret duties with the Royal Navy.

Leaving school, I spent a year or so studying Art in Brighton but found it a waste of time and joined the army in the Intelligence Corps, spending seven years with the Colours. Active service was in Egypt and Libya (Tripoli).

This gave me a lasting interest in military history, particularly the mediæval development of tactics – more specifically in old Japan. I studied classical Japanese swordsmanship and the proper use of a number of weapons, chiefly the halberd and straight spear.

Now, 50 or more years later and for my sins, I have attained 7th *dan* in *Kendō* and somewhat better in the art of drawing sword – *iai-jutsu*. Over the years and many visits to Japan, I have had published five academic books dealing with aspects of Japanese military history, one in conjunction with my wife, Patricia, (a formidable *Kendōka* of the same rank as myself), surveying halberd and spear types.

This autumn two volumes of fictional short stories featuring the Japanese Samurai will be published by Renaissance Books (Global Oriental) in conjunction with the University of Hawaii Press.

I retired from my career as a freelance designer in advertising in 1995. Since then I have also written and choreographed some complex fight sequences for a 'motion capture' animated film and am at present drafting the preliminary text of a screen play taking a serious look at the six days leading up to the Battle of Crécy. This may materialise, in time, into a feature length film

I have to thank The Perse wholeheartedly for its early stimulus and the foundation that has, ultimately, led to creativity and successful writing: to the school and my surviving old friends from those distant years, my deepest gratitude.

- Roald's published work is as follows:
Japanese Polearms, The Holland Press, London, 1965 (now out-of-print)
Rediscovering Budo, Global Oriental, Folkestone, 2004
Japanese Spears (Roald and Patricia Knutsen), Global Oriental, 2004
Sun Tzu and the Art of Medieval Japanese Warfare, Global Oriental, 2006

Tengu, The Shamanic and Esoteric Origins of Japanese Martial Arts, Global Oriental, 2011

- Forthcoming:
Tales of the Samurai – Stories of Old Japan, Book One
Tales of Enshin, The Reluctant Samurai, Book Two