



# The Vets

National Veterans Association Volume XIX Issue 1 January 2006

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**Leon Paul**

## Happy and Healthy New Year to all NVA Members!

### Passage to India

Richard Bonehill

On the afternoon of the 21st December my flight made its final descent to Heathrow Airport. The spectacular sights of central London lit up in all their Christmas glory was a fitting end to a magical journey. The nine hour flight from Delhi had taken me over the barren deserts of Northern India, the spectacular mountains of Afghanistan, the frozen wastes of Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Belorussia and the leaden skies of Eastern Europe. Quite a shock as I had not seen a single cloud in six weeks.

I had been working in Rajasthan as Sword Master on *Sharpe's Challenge*, two 90 minute films, starring Sean Bean as the rebellious rifleman of the 95th Regiment in Wellingtons Army.

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### Truro Fencing Club Sabre Team (Indian Branch)



Fans of the original television series filmed between 1993- 1997 will remember Sharpe's exciting adventures and the two new films promise to be more spectacular and certainly more swashbuckling than ever. The new production set in India after Waterloo stars Sean Bean as Sharpe and Toby Stephens (son of Sir Robert Stephens and Dame Maggie Smith) as the cruel William Dodd. A rogue British Officer in the pay of the Maharaja of Ferraghur. As I am sworn to secrecy that is the entire plot I can reveal at the moment! My job as Sword Master involved choreographing eleven fights and working alongside the Stunt Co-ordinator Gareth Milne in the staging of a number of spectacular battle sequences.



**Sean Bean is Sharpe**

The main two locations in Rajasthan were the awe inspiring Jaigarh Fort in Jaipur and the breathtaking Mehrangarh Fort in Jodhpur. Both forts were started in the 15th centuries and added to by successive rulers. Their size, complexity and location (both set on top of almost vertical 150 meter high cliffs) makes it no surprise that neither were ever conquered.

One giant gateway after another, complete with iron spikes on the gates to stop war elephants pushing them down, lead to successive courtyards which would become impassable killing fields. One cannot imagine any army conquering these magnificent fortifications without modern day air support or nuclear weapons. Their sheer size is overwhelming.

Our 'fighting teams' consisted of 10 Russian Stuntmen (veterans of the original series, excellent performers, hard men and hard drinkers!) 20 Indian stuntmen and up to 350 Indian extras. Add to this happy band horses, elephants, camels, goats, pigs, donkeys and some idea of the complexity of the shooting can be imagined. Days - and also a week of night shoots- were spent in temperatures in the 80's fighting and dying. It is a great testament to the professionalism to all those involved that over the nine action-packed weeks of shooting no injuries were sustained.

Many of the crew did succumb to illness such as Delhi-Belly but a certain proportion of these must be put down to self-inflicted injuries! The party schedule was taken as seriously as the shooting schedule. Working an eleven hour day, six day week meant that 'down time' was made the most of.



**Two new recruits to Truro Fencing Club  
Sean Bean & Toby Stephens**

Evenings were spent having dinner under the stars, usually by the pool and the one day a week off spent sunbathing and relaxing. One such day I visited the Holy City of Pushka to witness the biggest camel and horse fair in India. A fascinating experience which I will never forget which culminated in watching the sun set over the sacred lake. For a change no gin and tonic in hand as Pushka is a sacred city and no alcohol is available



**Russian Soldiers Waiting to Die**

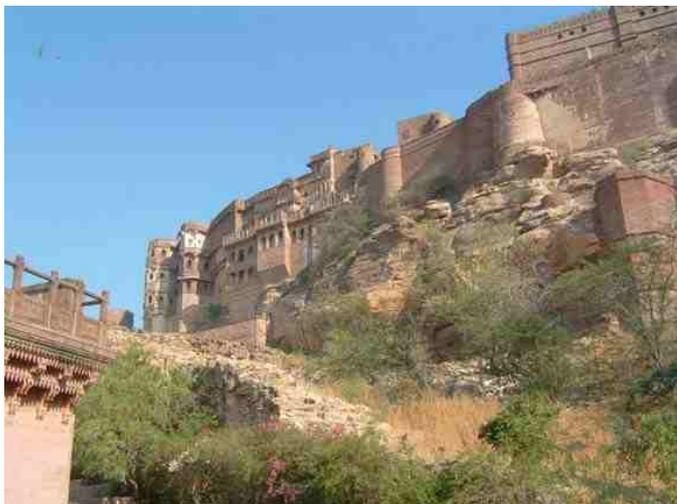
To be a swordsman in Rajasthan is regarded as a venerated position and I was treated with the greatest courtesy and respect by all I met. One of my most treasured memories of the trip will be the evening I spent with His Highness The Maharaja of Jaipur as his honoured guest for dinner in his Magnificent Diggi Palace. The Maharaja (or Nicco to his friends!) had loaned some of his polo ponies to the production and his graciousness and that of his family was overwhelming.

It is impossible in such a short article to convey the beauty of such a wonderful country. It is a continent of extremes. Poverty of biblical proportions exists alongside extreme wealth.



**Sunset over the sacred lake at Pushka**

There is great beauty and unspeakable ugliness but my abiding memory of my trip will be the friendliness and warmth of the Indian people. If you ever get the chance to visit this fascinating continent grab it with both hands, but remember to have all the necessary injections!



**Mehrangara Fort**

*Richard Bonehill is a fighting double, Sword Master and Fight Director who has worked in the film industry for 25 years. Sharpe's Challenge (and The Making of Sharpe) will be shown on British television in November 2006.*

## Insurance Issues

**Several members have asked questions concerning the insurance cover included with British Fencing Membership.**

**These questions have been directed to British Fencing and the insurers. Once the detailed answers have been received (and understood) an article will be published in the Newsletter.**

## Please Support the 100 Club

Hopefully by now you have renewed your 2006 membership to the NVA.

You will also have received an invitation to join the 100 Club. You should note, before you pass this offer up, that it is not open to just those fencers over 100.

I have no doubt that in the near future we will see some brave soul over 100 fencing épée, foil or sabre. But not quite this year.

No, this offer is wholly different, it is an invitation to win some cash, but also to help the NVA's effort towards the World Championships which are to be held in Bath September 2006.

The 100 Club is a vehicle to raise cash, but also the chance for you to win some back.

Numbers are limited to (you guessed it) the first 100 who apply.

A second club will be set up if there is sufficient support.

This is how it works: for your £20 membership you will be in two draws, at the National Championships and at the Xmas event. The first number drawn at each event will win £250, the second £150 and the third £100. With membership below 100 to a minimum of 80 the prize money will be pro rata.

## Please support the 100 Club initiative

## Dates for your Diary

### **NVA National Championships, 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> March 2006. GL1 Leisure Centre, Gloucester.**

Open to all NVA members. Results will be used for selection for the 2006 European Team and the Individual World Championships. Entry forms circulated with this Newsletter

### **Bath Unisex Sabre & Foil, 22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2006. University of Bath.**

Open to all NVA members. Enjoy fencing and dinner on Saturday night. More details and entry forms in a later Newsletter

### **2006 European Team Championships, 25<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> May 2006. Turku, Finland.**

Selection will be based on the results of the NVA National Championships 2006.

### **NVA Age Group Qualifiers, 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> June 2006**

Open to all NVA members. Results will be used for selection for the 2006 World Championships

### **World Veterans Fencing Championships, 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> September 2006 University of Bath**

Selection will be based on results the results of the NVA National Championships 2006 and the NVA Age Group Qualifiers 2006. Details will be circulated to those selected.

## Veterans Competition Scratch Policy

It became clear at the 2005 NVA Nationals that for everyone's convenience and consideration, a consistent scratch policy must be applied.

Starting from the 2006 Nationals, the following policy will be adopted at all NVA events:

Any fencer who has not reported to the DT by the time published for close of check-in will be scratched. A fencer may if necessary check in by telephoning the DT.

A fencer who has checked in by telephone, but who does not present themselves in person to the DT by the time published for close of check-in, is not guaranteed to be allowed to fence.

Any fencer who knows in advance that they will be unable to fence is requested to inform the organisers as soon as possible.

## Membership 2006

*John Mason*

We had a record number of 319 members at the end of 2005. We had been stuck at around 250 for several years but suddenly new applications started to arrive.

I hope that there will be another increase in membership this year, particularly with the publicity coming from holding the World Championships in Bath.

As members you will see some changes in the forms that I send out for membership renewal and entry to competitions. I have added requests for donations to just about every form of communication. This hasn't happened before and I want everyone to understand why I am doing it now.

The event will cost a lot of money to stage well and we do want it to be as good as we can possibly make it. We have 9 months to go and we would like to raise a further £30,000. So, please contribute (frequently) and try to avoid appeal fatigue.

## New Year Revolutions – for Veteran Fencers

Coming round some time on New Year's afternoon, and having checked the pulse and prised the eyelids open, is an ideal time to put pen to paper and set about listing all those resolutions we've been making for ourselves (and breaking within 24 hours) over the past 40 years or so.

Number 1 has to be "never celebrate New Year with such alcoholic vigour again." This has been penned so many times that it almost writes itself, shakily, on the page.

"Must get down to some serious training that actually involves the body and doesn't just remain a cerebral exercise" comes next. This, of course, is much easier to think about than do, which is why it re-occurs annually.

Another, for many, is to ensure that weapons are all checked and ready for action days before a competition rather than a cursory glance and a quick check to ensure the spring's working, when "last call for Joe (or Jenny to stay PC) Bloggs" is heard.

The new clothing rules add to this problem, as it is not likely to fool any self-respecting referee by the artistic use of a fine-tipped selection of felt pens. So that old, but dearly loved canvas épée jacket with buttons down the side, needs to be confined to Malcolm Fare's excellent fencing museum at last.

Talking of museums, how many of us are walking Old Testaments when it comes to the rules? I know it's difficult to keep up, but perhaps that's another item for the list!

Many of us regularly enter open competitions, so "Tolerance" is another item for my list. I know it's difficult when faced with a teenage opponent who is fast, quick thinking and oozing confidence, especially after they've just delivered a 5-0 thrashing, but I must remember that I was fast once, and probably treated my older opponents in exactly the same way. (I'm still delighted that the flick hit has almost disappeared however, as the body can't take the punishment it used to when younger and anyway, I could never master the art of delivering one back that didn't look intentional).

After all that, there are many compensations to getting a bit older and when I can remember them, I'll write them in an article for the Newsletter, but meanwhile, a very healthy and successful New Year to you all

Frank Mills



**News Year's Resolutions? Gone!**

## Letters, emails and photos to the editor

Dear Veteran Fencer,

Here at Newsletter Central we welcome your views. Please feel free to write letters, send emails and electronic photographs to the editor with discussion points, make observations that we can publish. This newsletter is your chance to be read by a larger audience.

We welcome news and views, controversial or not, to start a lively and interesting letters page in future issues.

Ed

### Veterans' Notable Results 2005 and early 2006 (L32 or top half)

#### Shropshire Open 2005 (omitted from last newsletter)

Rick Kent, 3rd Men's Epée

Astrid Merrick, 8th Women's Foil

#### Irish Open

##### WE (18)

Fiona Haldane 1<sup>st</sup>

#### Scottish Open

##### WF (33)

Caron Hale 10th

#### Cambridge Winter Tournament 2006

##### Men's Epee (57)

Andrew Brown 13<sup>th</sup>

Howard West 17<sup>th</sup>

Iain Rugheimer 22nd

##### Men's Foil (55)

Terence Salinger 24th

Anthony Conyard 25<sup>th</sup>

Frank Mills 29<sup>th</sup>

##### Women's Epee (32)

Linda Lawes 15<sup>th</sup>

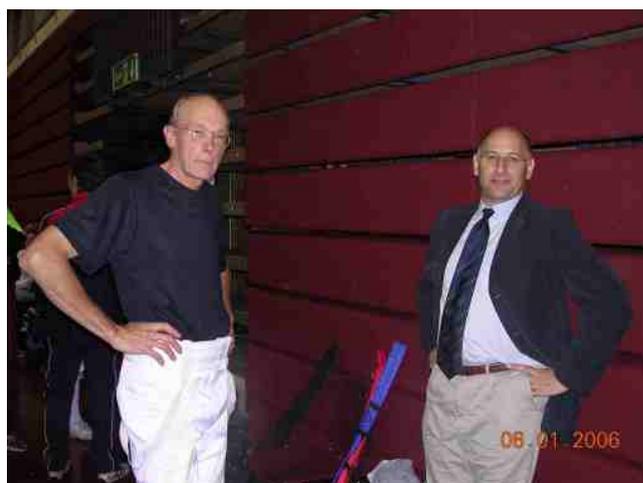
##### Women's Foil (25)

Dawn Townsend =3<sup>rd</sup>

Jo Bowyer 10<sup>th</sup>

Astrid Merrick 11<sup>th</sup>

Linda Lawes 12<sup>th</sup>



Howard West and Geoff Silverman at the Cambridge Winter Tournament



Anthony Conyard in the Salle Paul team winners of the 2005 London League