

On-line Interview:

Slater Williams 6th Dan of The E.S.A.



Senior instructor and Grading examiner, Chairman of The E.S.A. Technical committee.
Affiliation officer and executive member of the English Shotokan Academy

2002 passed 6th Dan with T Kase

1997 passed 5th Dan WKSA. with T Kase

1992 passed 4th Dan ESI with H. Shirai

1988 passed 3rd Dan JKA with K Enoeda

1983 passed 2nd Dan JKA with Andy Sherry

1977 passed 1st Dan JKA with K Enoeda

1970 started karate

Member of the World Karate Shotokan Academy

Sensei Williams is widely recognized as one of the top exponents in the UK. His Karate excellence is internationally recognized.

UKKD: Slater judging by the impressive grading history shown above you certainly have had a long career in karate and trained with some of the best in the business. can you tell us you earliest memories as a beginner and who did you start out with.

SW: It was 1970 I was sixteen and began at a local KUGB club ran by Dave Sharky, a first Dan, it was at the community centre, literally over the road from my house, think it took me two years to pick up enough courage to join, the training was basic but it lade down the foundations. For my Kyu Grading I had to travel to Cyril Cummins club, Sensei Asano was the central region senior instructor for the KUGB at that time, Cyril Cummins would have him down for grading, this was my introduction to the wider world away from my local club, Cyril became my mentor, we are still good friends to this day I still train with him when I can find the time , I would travel as often as I could to attend courses with visiting Japanese instructors ,Asano Tomita, Enoeda, and the seniors from the K.U.G.B.

UKKD: Was there any reason for studying the Shotokan system? Or was Shotokan the predominant style in your area?

SW: No as I said it was only a stones throw to the dojo from my house, I was completely unaware of the existence other styles, I later found out about the temple karate club in Birmingham, and would train regularly with the Wado-Ryu, but found Shotokan better suited to my physique

UKKD: Slater what was training in the early seventies like? Was the training less technical then and did it involve the repetitious training I was familiar with in the late seventies?

SW: I think our enthusiasm often got the better of us, fighting was the reason many of us got into Karate, not competing in tournaments, the sport aspect was a part of what we did but not necessarily the main reason, you could say the results speak for them selves, it was certainly far more brutal, cuts and bruises were the norm, however I think with maturity comes change, its ridiculous for me in my 50s to train the way I did in my twenties, with relaxing and better technique I'm far more effective now, but I'm not convinced I would be were I am now, without the hard training in the early years, time will tell, as the next generation approach middle age we will be able to compare.

UKKD: Looking at the photos of the BSA Club (1970's) on your website, gives an insight into the training then, it seemed to have a more rough and ready feel to the training, was this the case? I remember similar venues for training, old Nissan huts and Scout huts not like the modern sports centers we have today.

Link to photos
www.wanadookarate.com

SW: Your referring to the B.S.A. actually we were quite proud of that venue (sadly it burnt down some years back) for the times it was excellent, separate changing room and showers, a good wooden floor, and a caretaker that let us use the place for as long as we wanted. We had a strong club at the time, I would teach the beginners up to green belt, and then we had the senior class taught by Cyril Cummins, you can see a very young Ronnie Christopher in the line up.



UKKD: What type of fighting systems interests you apart from Karate?

SW: all the major martial arts interest me, although I haven't the time to study them in depth, I prefer to keep to karate.

UKKD: Slater at what time did you meet the likes of Sensei Taiji Kase and Steve Cattle? And what effect did they have on your training, both mental and physical?

SW: I first met Steve in the mid 70s, Cyril and I would invite him for courses and grading, from the Start Steve's approach was different from any other Instructor.



I knew of sensei Kase from the very early years, at crystal Palace, he and Sensei Shirai were at the table with Sensei Enoeda when I took 3rd Dan, However Steve was the one who convinced me to come on a trip to Ireland, to attend "academy" training with sensei Kase.

I can recall thinking, after twenty years this is the karate that I had imagined as a child of ten, the hairs at the back of my neck stood on end, for the first time in over twenty years I regained that excitement that I felt as I did when I first set foot in a dojo, I can recall making a mental note, of how I felt inside, as this would in the years to come remind me why I do what I do in the name of karate, yes technically I have learned a vast amount from Steve and from Sensei Kase over the last 16 years of Academy training

UKKD: When did the formation of your Pershore and Redditch clubs take place and why did you decide to teach Karate?

SW: Pershore and Redditch are relatively new clubs ten and fifteen years, my introduction to teaching was around 1977, with the formation of the BSA in Birmingham with Cyril Cummins, and a few years later my own club in Sheldon heath, assisted by my good friends Robert and martin Timmins.



I never intended to be an instructor, I was invited to teach by Cyril over a celebratory drink after having passed my first Dan, I had being training for seven years then, but it came as a shock to think as my self as an instructor.

UKKD: Slater can you explain how the ESA was formed and for what reason? And what is the Shotokan Ryu-Kase-Ha Instructors Academy?

SW: The English Shotokan Academy was officially formed in January 1990 by the late Sensei Steve Cattle 6th Dan. As you know Steve was for many years a student of Sensei Taiji Kase and it was from his desire to pursue a more traditional form of Karate, many of the founder members had twenty or more years experience, most of us in the KUGB. The English Shotokan academy is a fully constituted association, and I'm proud to be its Technical Director.

The he concept "Shotokan Ryu Kase Ha" has been in existence for a quite long time, but the style was founded officially in the year 2002. Its function is to promote and develop sensei Kase system for instructors; third Dan is the minimum grade for membership.

UKKD: Did you ever compete on the tournament circuit? If yes did you enter both Kata and Kumite events?

SW: Yes we all did, I would always enter both Kata and Kumite, at that time Mike Rag was in charge of the Central region squad, I think we feared him far more than any opponent.

UKKD: Who was the biggest influence on you over the 30 years plus years of training?

SW: It would have to be Sensei Kase and sensei Cattle, Steve gave me the confidence I needed, I had become disillusioned with karate or should I say Shotokan, having trained with Higaonna Sensei from the Goju Ryu, I was so impressed that I was considering starting from the begging in Goju Ryu, Steve convinced me to Hold back until I had been on the Academy course, I haven't looked back since, The academy has enabled me to train throughout Europe. Ironically I now have a greater appreciation of Shotokan,



UKKD: Slater have you ever trained in Kobujutsu (Weapons) and what is your view of this type of training?

SW: Yes but I'm only a beginner, Julian Mead has for many years been an invited guest at our residential course. I have practiced with the Bo with Julian, and apart from a brief encounter with Kendo my knowledge is limited, an appreciation of weapons is essential, if you want to understand karate you have to study not only the techniques but also the history, and its cultural heritage

UKKD: Slater do you encourage your student to use supplementary training such as weights or gym work?

SW: This is for them to decide, light weight and gym work is fine, I belong to a gym myself, I prefer Yoga for myself; I find many of the concepts are relevant to karate.

UKKD: Slater what plans do you have for your clubs and do have any promising students coming through the ranks and how do you encourage them in their training?

SW: My wife Jayne is second Dan, and my youngest son Neil is now twenty-six and 2nd Dan, both superb karate-ka in their own right I have a large group of dedicated brown belts; I would like to see them all one day gain first Dan. How do you encourage them? I try to teach them to enjoy karate for its own sake, and not be preoccupied with Grading.

UKKD: Slater just to finish what is most important thing to you in your life right now and would you change anything in your Karate career so far?

SW: That's a difficult one; Karate is my life, but not the most important, that has to be my family, as for change that hopefully is a constant, without change progress is impossible, if I could go back in time and start again I would probably change a lot of things, however that doesn't necessarily mean they would be for the better.

UKKD: Slater thank you for this On-line interview with the UK Karate Directory.

If you would like more information on Slater Williams and his clubs go here:-

www.wanadookarate.com