

Ron Historyo's
Time Travel
to the

Wrestlers of the
Golden Age

Job Shambley



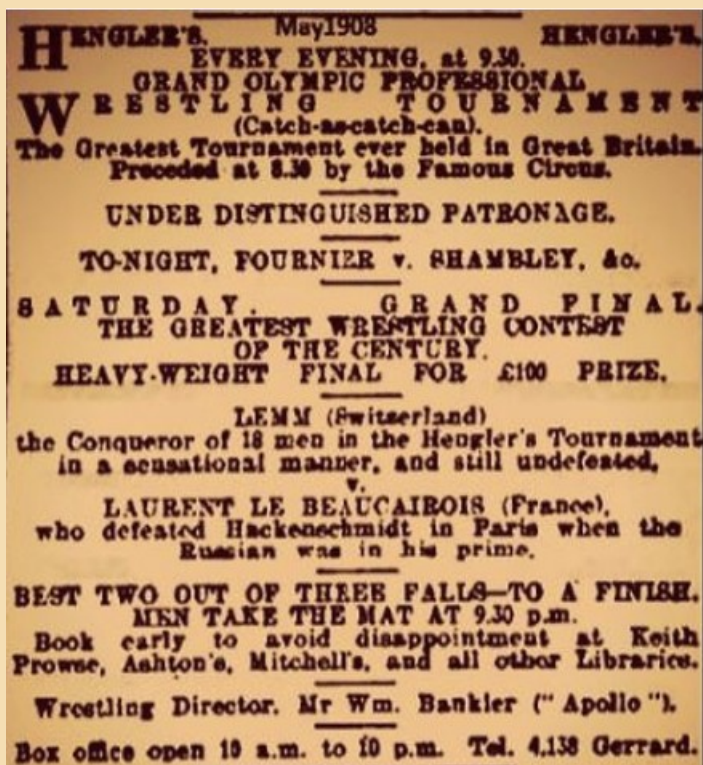
To open my story I am going to set the scene of a warm and close night, sunset at about 9.30pm on 17th July 1933. Despite it being a summer night, you could smell the pies in the air, you could also sense the occasion, miners coming out of their locals with the smell of real ale on their breath. The place, Springfield Park . Home of Wigan FC.

Make no mistake, at this time All In or Free Style Wrestling was in it's infancy. Although they had tried an odd show in Morecambe and Blackpool there was nothing regular yet. It would be several more years before there was any in nearby Bolton.

Fitting that this type of wrestling should be brought to the home of Lancashire wrestling and who else to bring the spectators in than a favourite son, Billy Riley.

I doubt that the fans knew that they were in for a deception, this was to be show wrestling and the opponent was Jack Pye. Eight years younger than Billy, Pye weighed twelve stone twelve pounds in those days and Billy Riley was eleven stones and four pounds.

According to press reports, it was a terrific fight witnessed by 7000, won by Riley in the fourth round with a pin. The crowd had been wild, breaking down railings in the cheap enclosure and surging forward, but there was one other memorable piece of comedy in the fight. Comedy and yet enacted as serious. Pye had Riley tangled in the ropes and was dealing out punishing blows and when intervening the referee got tangled as well and ended up being thrown by Pye onto the announcers table. The referee was 54 years of age, but with what I am about to explain he was more than able to take a bump or two.



This is the story of Job Shambley, a wrestling pioneer.

Born 29th May 1879 with a birth registered in Wigan, Job was born in Ince and baptised at All Saints Wigan, but as a young boy his father moved a couple of villages up the road through Hindley into Westhoughton where Job lived all his life. Westhoughton, four miles from Bolton and five miles from Wigan. The reason for the move was quite simple, to be near the collieries of Little Hulton for work.

These were hard times. Even Job's sister Maria worked at the mines as a Pit Brow Lass shoveling coal. They were mostly coal miners down Hart Street in Westhoughton where Job grew up. Later to live on Wigan Road,

like his father Henry Shambley, Job became a Coal Hower.

All wrestling as we know had a connection. The fields were connected to the music halls. Some of the Lancashire Catch wrestlers did not like this, but it did offer money. Some of the music hall people who promoted or wrestled went on to promote the new wrestling of the 1930's.

Of course you could still earn a side stake wrestling in the fields and as early as 1903, I found Job winning £20 at the Griffin fields of Burnley. But that connection grows strong when you consider below that in 1908 Job Shambley was working for William Bankier at Henglers Circus. Bankier went on to start much wrestling in the North West such as Liverpool, Blackpool and Douglas, and Shambley who loved wrestling was involved all his life. When Shambley died in 1961 it was stated that Billy Riley, Jack Pye and Tom Rose were friends of his.

In a tournament at Crystal Palace in 1904 Shambley finished third behind Peter Bannon of Burnley and Joe Carroll of Wigan who were joint winners. The competition was for the 11 stones Championship of the World. In December 1906 it was back to the fields in Oldham, a match with Peter Bannon for the championship of England at 156 Lbs on a Saturday afternoon. Trailing 1-0 to Bannon it went dark and was to be finished on Monday. Monday came and Bannon failed to weigh in so the £50 each stakes were paid to Shambley. Crowd on the Saturday was 500. Shambley had previously lost to Bannon, ironically at Springfield Park Wigan, but it has to be said that Bannon was a Middle weight and Shambley was Welter.

Also in 1907 in the Wigan area, fields again on a July night Shambley won £40 fighting

James Foster of Pemberton. This match was said to be for the Championship of England. The match was drawn, but reports suggest that Shambley was defending champion and hence was named winner as Foster had to get a win. There was no sort of governing body to pick champions and no record books other than the digital papers that we now have.

1908 saw Shambley at the Alhambra in the National Sports Club Tournament. He tried middleweight in a tournament won by Joe Carroll and a tournament that also features Henry Irslinger at that weight. Within weeks Job Shambely fought Joe Carroll at the Burnley Theatre and unfortunately broke his ankle in the bout and was taken to hospital. About five weeks later Job Shambley still made Henglers for that Tounament.

In 1909 Shambley lost to Bob Berry of Wigan for the Championship of England at Middleweight. This was at the Westwood Grounds It was a replay after rain washed out their fight at Pendlebury the week before. Berry won £50.

Tom Rose fought many fights with Shambley as his handler and yet they fought each other in what I suppose was a sort of exhibition at Dillington Park in Barnsley. It was an hour with side stakes but the object was for Shambley to throw Rose twice in the hour. I am greatly suspicious that this was all arranged for entertainment.

In 1910 Shambley had another go at the NSC Tournament at the Alhambra, this time at light weight. Unfortunately for Job, Peter Gotz was the Tournament winner on this occasion and beat Shambley along the way in the later stages. On the 23rd August 1912 Job Shambley took part in a classic at Atherton FC. The crowd was 2000 with stakes of £50. The opponent was Jack Carroll known as Young Whistler. Jack Carroll was handled by his uncle Joe Carroll and they fought under 11 stones.

Shambley's trainer was Tom Rose. The match was to be one and a half hours, best of three falls. They fought in the rain and the betting was even. Towards the end of the 45 minute match Carroll completely lost his head and was fighting. The referee tried to calm him, but at the restart the fight continued with punches from Carroll, Shambley having to defend.

Whistler was disqualified and upon that hit the referee Jack Smith of Greenheys. The wrestlers were separated and ordered off the ground and the Referee made his announcement to the grandstand. The crowd were greatly excited because of the betting. Job Shambley was given the stakes and declared winner. All these guys had been friends way back. In 1908 Shambley had fought in Joe Carroll's and Young Whistlers Competition in London.

I have a slight problem with all this. It does sound a bit like the match that Riley and Pye had in 1933. Could it be that these Lancashire wrestlers, who had worked in the London Music Halls had realised that there was money to be made in the way that wrestling entertainment was portrayed to the public? I leave it to the reader to form his own opinion.

One thing is for sure, there were regular shows at Atherton FC and the following month, I have a story that presents the human side to Job Shambley's life. Probably the very next wrestling at Atherton was a match between Tom Rose and Joe Bailey. On that day Job

Shambley was at the ground acting as a gate checker(seems to me he had a small hand in the promoting).

That night Job went for a few pints with his brother Henry Shambley in Atherton. Henry was Job's elder brother but close in age. After leaving The Rope and Anchor for whatever reason Henry went to the station alone to get the train back to Daisy Hill in Westhoughton.. By habit, if he missed it he walked along the track. On Sunday morning his decapitated remains were found on the track.

It's a sad tale of hard times back in 1912, but not as sad as a previous tragedy just before Christmas in 1910. On 21st December 900 workers clocked on for work at the Hulton Colliery known as the Pretoria Pit. Job Shambley lost two brothers William and Albert in that disaster, an explosion that caused much of the roofing timbers to collapse. Job was wrongly reported killed in the press and in fact was one of the first to enter the shaft in a rescue attempt. This was a national disaster with 344 killed and only three survivors.

It pales into insignificance that a couple of months earlier Job Shambley had beaten Joe Carroll at Ince Athletic Grounds in nine minutes. In February 1913 a crowd of 3000 watched again at Atherton while Shambley beat Miles Sweeney, Shambley at that point stated that he challenged anyone in the world to fight him between 10 stones and 10 stones 4.

The following month at Atherton Job defeated Jack Bailey a Swinton Footballer, again I suspect a possible arrangement as Bailey had been a second and trainer for Shambley at an earlier match. In May again at Atherton, Shambley was outpointed by Tom Rose, his mate, and the attendance was 2500, but all this reminds me of a small regular roster just like Jack Cassidy. had for his shows. All boys together.

By July of that year at Atherton, Shambley was on his trilogy of grudge matches with Jack Bailey, by now the crowd down to 800. Shambley lost this one claiming to be feeling unwell. Late August and the Openshaw Alhambra saw Shambley defeat the Salford Dane, Lauritz Neilson, who was surely no longer competitively wrestling at this stage. His life told in another story.

Then the war came and beyond that I only found Job Shambley wrestling one more time in Wigan, in 1919 against J Lowton of Aspull.

Life had known happiness as well as these hard times and there was family life as well as wrestling. In 1906 Job had married Mary Lyons in Westhoughton. 1911 saw a daughter Rose, and 1913 a son Albert. Wife Mary was still alive when Job died in 1961 and they had been married for 55 years.

Sadly it was poor luck again that Rose died age ten and Albert died age 33 in 1946 as far as I can tell unmarried.

The tribute cannot finish without the war. Job was in the East Lancashire Regiment before the war and a wrestling champion and did a second stint in the war with the Royal Defence Corps where he served over in France. His health suffered as he sustained a Gas Attack

and by 1939 I was to find him living at Southfield Drive Westhoughton with an army disability pension. Amongst his medals was a Victory Medal.

Over the years some of these famous Lancashire wrestlers have had bio's written and they can be found on the web. Others, such as Job Shambley have been missed.

His life was packed with events and would make a great film.

In researching this I have come to realize that very hard wrestling in the fields of Lancashire went through a bit of a change after the Music Halls got hold of it. The regular wrestling at Atherton may or may not have been the real thing. Certainly after the Hackenschmidt/Madralski match in 1904 wrestling had changed to a money making entertainment.

Had this entertainment come back to Lancashire before we thought? I don't know, it's just a suggestion. You the reader can decide.

His obituary read DEATH OF A PRIZEFIGHTER

A friend said he would rather have a fight than his dinner. It was also said that he was the cleanest, roughest, toughest finest wrestler in all of England. He could often be found in Westhoughton British Legion. He is buried in Westhoughton Parish Churchyard

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