

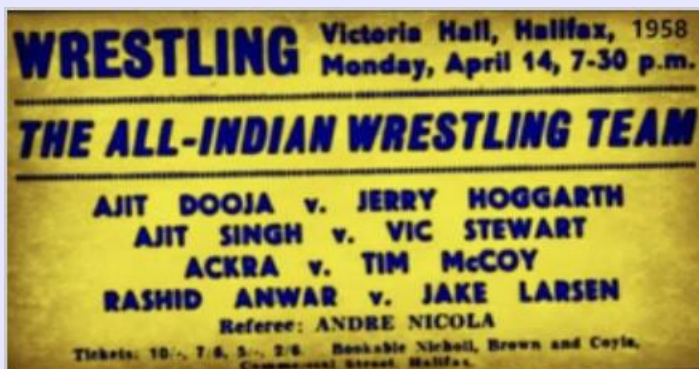
Ron's Wrestling Ramblings

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Halifax

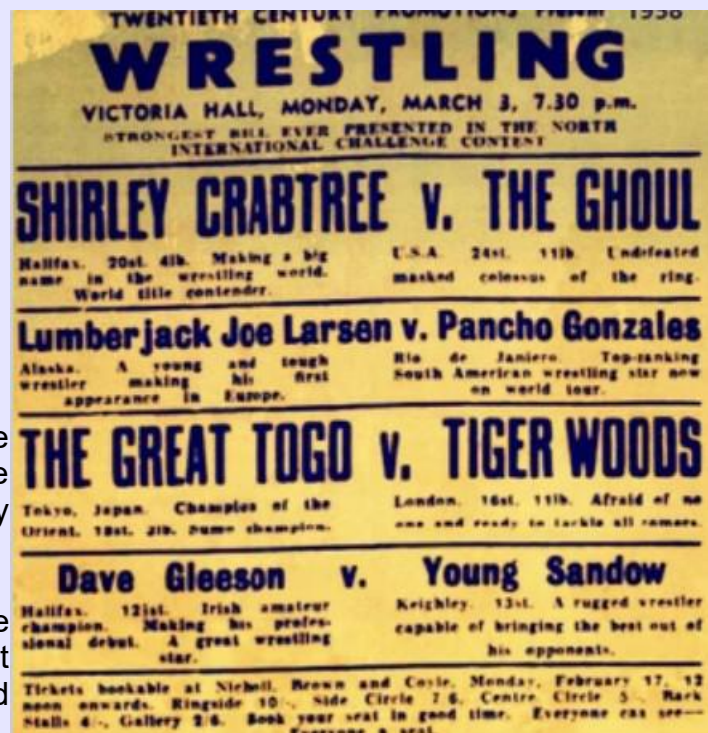
Ron

Home of the Crabtrees , you will find Shirley's dad wrestling at The Shay in 1936. Some summer wrestling at The Shay in the 1930's but it was rare that there was weekly wrestling. For the most part Winters at the Drill Hall on Prescott Street did bi weekly wrestling for many years.



By 1958 the Independents had muscled in at the Drill Hall , but Ted Beresford was promoting at the Victoria Hall. Yet another capture of Jerry Hoggarth (above) having an outing.

Some time in 1957 I believe Shirley Crabtree departed from Joint and similar to The Ghoul it seems was getting a bit out of condition and migrated to perhaps an easier life travel wise.



Later I will tell you the story of this meeting between two icons of British Wrestling history.

This one is Twentieth century promotions and not Beresford. I will give you the full story.

The Drill Hall , I believe has been converted into flats, perhaps about 20 years ago or more.

Hope some of you will pick out anything that stands out from these Halifax Galleries.

<https://www.wrestlingheritage.com/morehistoryoalbums>

Anglo Italian

The more I see of these various JP bills, the more I remain in awe of them in their fourth year. There was clearly plenty of work for loads of wrestlers; those that behaved got tv exposure and became names; with the rewards that entailed.

It all just centred around discipline, as we have been saying for a very long time now. Great for the fans too, with these five-bout bills.

The switching between JPs and the Indies at this venue does my nut in at the start of this set.

Apart from Shirley, so many other locals appearing regularly for the mere cost of the bus-fare: Bernard Murray, Colbeck, Masambula, Baldwin. I mean, to see the exotic African Witchdoctor appearing fortnightly in 'alifax is going to make you start to wonder, innit?

What emerges from this set, for me, is the minor mystery of the Morrell and Beresford relationship. How did that little one emerge and develop and remain? Since Norman seems to have been impossible as a business partner, how did Ted manage with him?

Ron



Shirley and the Ghoul

My story of the Ghoul v Shirley is quite detailed. This was to be the pinnacle of Shirley's career, thus far it had been wrestling in Paris. Just passing mid twenties he was between 19 and 20 stones and clearly getting the huge push from his new promoter. Shirley, according to the Newspaper had made his debut at Newcastle in June 1952. I was with William R all the way that his debut was at Fleetwood against Gerry Hoggarth on 27th June that year. Alas we were wrong and he did fight Orford at Newcastle on the 14th June. He also beat Bob McMasters on 23rd June at Leeds before that Fleetwood meeting. After six years as a wrestler Shirley's mother was going to be there for the very first time.

Locals were interviewed and complaints ranged from the Ghoul not being the original, it looks like he had piled on even more pounds than normal and his fitness was poor despite the hype of training for eight weeks for this fight. Mitchell Gill swore it was the original as he knew him well. The charade was not appreciated as the best wrestling bill ever had been expected and it should have been advertised as a comedy. The consensus was that they would not get away with a promotion like this again as it had been fraudulent. It was a disgrace. Press verdict ...not mine. In the next few weeks Shirley was to do more blockbusters against Bill Benny and The Great Togo.

TED BERESFORD Presents

WRESTLING

VICTORIA HALL, HALIFAX

MONDAY, DECEMBER 8 1958

COMMENCE AT 7.30 P.M.

ALAN GARFIELD (Australia)	v.	SANDY ORFORD (Wales)
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NORMAN WALSH (Middlesbrough)	v.	Judo AL HAYES (Westminster)
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JOHNNY CZESLAW (Hungary)	v.	DON MENDOZA (Well-known in Rutherford)
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AL MIQUET (Huddersfield)	v.	AL NICOL (Nottingham)
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Prices of Admission : 7/6, 5/- and 3/-

Tickets bookable at Nicholl Brown and Coyle, Commercial Street, Halifax
Phone Halifax 3996

Mad Mac

Interesting to note that Johnny Czeslaw was, whether by accident or design, billed from Hungary. Also Don Mendoza being "well-known in Huddersfield": I can't imagine there being many Mendozas in the phone book around those parts.....

Anglo Italian

Yes, I sure noticed Ted alone, hence my comment. He even italicized himself. I mean, he was doing all right on home turf. Nice little Halifax weeklies. Probably had a few other venues. I wonder what made him want to throw his lot in with niggardly Norman, and place his name unalphabetically second. Yes, Ted had a great mixture of his regular local talent and a few exotic Southerners; it must have worked very well. Garfield seemed intent on working at every single venue at least once. The greatest traveller?

Ron



The Bill Benny bout with Shirley was changed to Garibaldi, who was squashed, and in the Togo match Shirley threw him out and he could not get back in time. Probably Shirley's biggest push before Big Daddy. All those bills through the ages and yet for one bill in particular a guy who never did much with Joint was advertised as an absolute sensation. Not clear if it was 20th Century promotions or who. Any one out there think Lord Bertie was any good?

Concerning Rugby league, the newspapers stated that Shirley had played Rugby for Siddal Jr RL. I don't know why this was pushed as I thought he played some pro, or I wonder if he only made the

reserves. Anyone know who Mr Superman of Nottingham was?

James Morton

I believe he with Ponsonby was a brilliant crowd worker. When Lady Chatterly came out for a time Ponsonby became the gamekeeper Mellors.

Hack

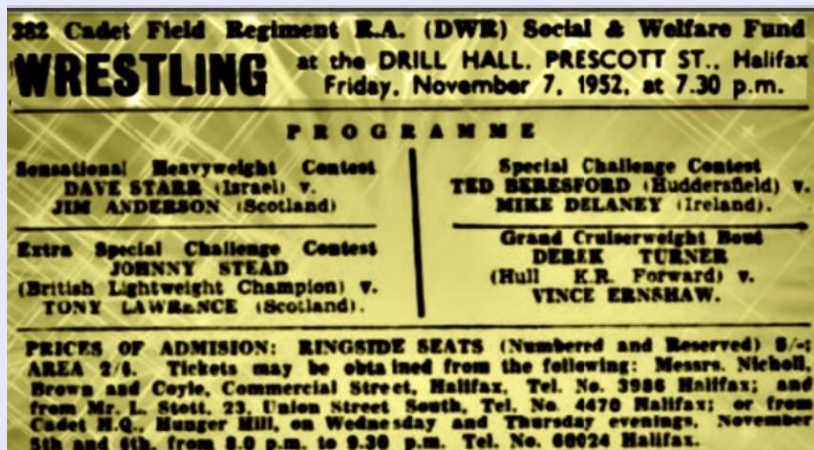
A superb summary of Halifax wrestling and some insights into Shirley. Ron, you ask about Lord Bertie Topham. I saw quite a bit of him. From a fan's perspective I thought he was great and cannot understand why he did not get on better. He carried off his gimmick to perfection and was great entertainment. I think it was Eddie Rose (sorry Eddie if it wasn't you) that said Bertie had a trial for Joint with Jack Atherton and Jack didn't rate him, as wooden as a chair and questioning his work ethic.

From my fan's perspective that was not the case.

ianwpringle

Can also verify Topham worked for joints. I have him billed at Newcastle Sat. Dec. 12th 1959 against Alf Cadman.

Ron



Just had a further look through the local Halifax papers and I have seen the evidence that Norman Morrell and Beresford promoted the shows for the army cadets since the war. Maybe in 1958 Morrell just let Ted get on with it as his own territory.

When Beresford leaves the Drill Hall in late 1958 for the Victoria Hall according to the papers, the Drill Hall promotion then was Norman F Berry with Shirley as Matchmaker. I wonder if this was a mistake

and was Max Crabtree.

Ted Beresford wrestled on his own promotion until late 1952, then refereed some of the shows before staying behind the scenes.

bkendo1

Ron you're correct in assuming it was Max. Shirley was not a matchmaker, and according to some old pros who played RL Shirley was a poor rugby player, but his claim to have been a guardsman fails scrutiny. Basically he wasn't a guardsman.

Anglo Italian

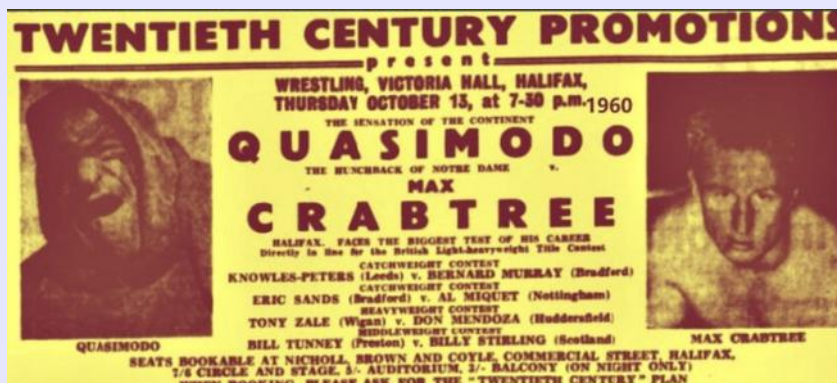
Poor Shirl. Not much standing up in his favour.

One thing has to be said, however much we all despise the Big Daddy character and all that surrounded it and, especially its effects on other wrestlers and the business as a whole: Shirley turned up and did it. Many a wrestler couldn't manage that.

Ron

It seems to me that 20th Century Promotions was his great push.

Amazing that he finally made it in the mid 1970's.



When he came back as the Guardsman I did not think he was that bad. The Winsford televised match with Naggers after Stampede was a very good bout. Still not met anyone that went except myself.

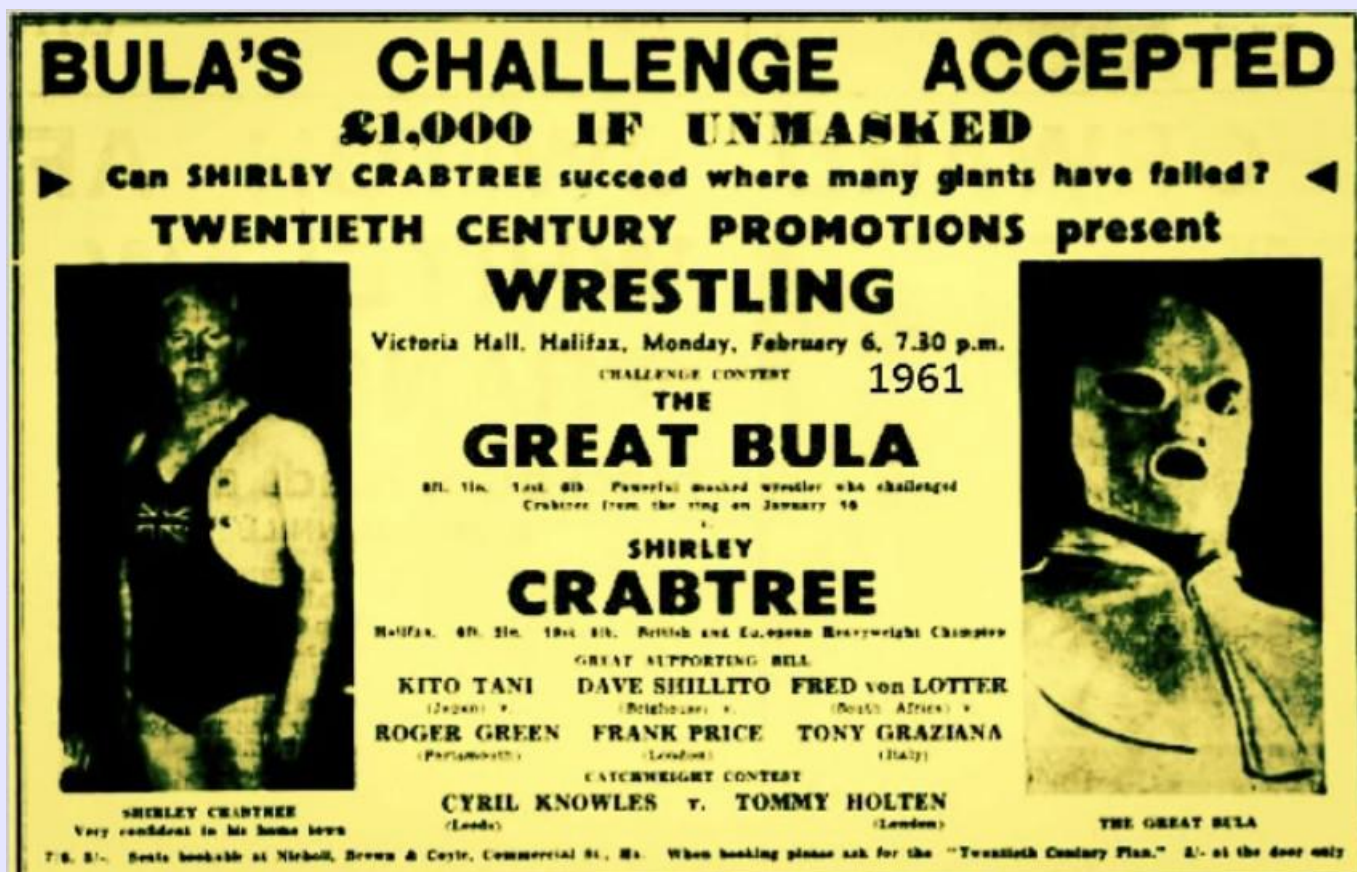
If Shirley has any fans they should certainly learn his full history from 1952. It's not a bad story.

The journey continues through 1960 now. No other town could chart the rise of the Crabtrees better than Halifax. From 1952 it is shown that Shirley was with Joint and began a new path in 1958 finding work along with his brother tied to Norman Berry and also with Jack Taylor.



By 1960 Shirley was European champion of their own Federation, getting massive press coverage, supposedly turning down more than £200 a week to tour India because of commitments to defend his title, also hotly disputed by the media that Billy Joyce was the real champ. Berry was claiming that Shirley had beaten Joyce five times whilst with Joint.

Exciting times and a great mixture of Ted Beresford promotions and other independents. Brother Max was also trying for Box Office beating Quasimodo.



I personally think the Shirley Crabtree story is fascinating, and I just love to find a good newspaper bill that can at times even rival a poster. Twentieth Century Promotions was years ahead of it's time with this advertising. I even found a write up of the bout with Great Bula taking the lead only for Shirley to Boston Crab the hell out of him twice. Bula duly unmasked although he was not named. Almost certainly Big Boy Charlie Scott. The £1000 of course would have been fiction.

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