

Ron's Wrestling Ramblings

Join Ron Historyo and add your comments in the forum

Manchester

<https://heritagedocs.wixsite.com/talkwrestling/forum/memories-of-the-old-days/more-manchester-investigations-1950-s>

Ron

Quite a few years ago now I wrote a seven part Manchester Series.

Of late I have been able to find a few more pieces of history.

I have some new bills but alas, at the moment the galleries are out of action as far as adding to them goes.

Manchester fans will be aware that every year Kings Hall wrestling stopped for the circus and it was quite late starting up again. Picking up on opening night in 1955 I have the bill, and the promoter as always, since wartime was Dick and Jessie Rogers. I don't think Bartelli ever worked for Rogers, maybe just too busy with Wryton, or was it rivalry. Why would Wryton move into the Free Trade Hall that night and go head to head. Who had the best show.

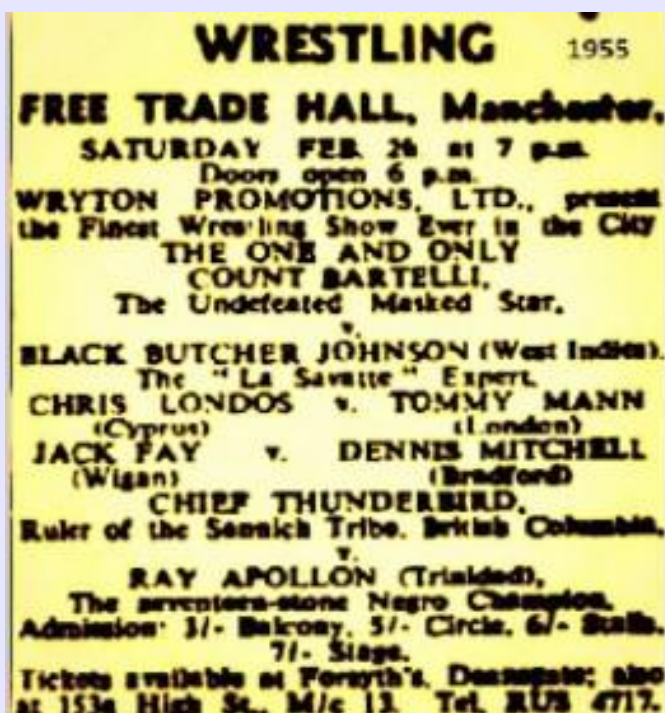
Crucially Belle Vue slightly cheaper.



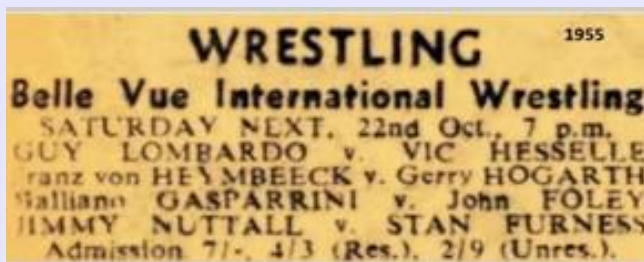
BELLE VUE WRESTLING
MANCHESTER. MANAGING DIRECTOR: R. H. DIXON
SATURDAY NEXT 26th FEB. 7 p.m.
GRAND RE-OPENING PROGRAMME 1955

"King Kong" TAVERN (Singapore) 1 Engagement only prior to World Championships v. BILL BENNY	IVAN MARTINSON (France) 1951 World Heavyweight Champ. & 7 times Champ. of Europe v. VIC HESSELLE
FARMERS BOY (Dewsbury) v. BILLY JOYCE (Wigan)	
BLACK PANTHER (Br. W. Indies) v. JACK KEEGAN (Rochdale)	

NOTE—WRESTLING EVERY SATURDAY AT 7-0 p.m.
BOOK NOW: 7/-, 4/3 (Res.), 2/9 (Unres.). EAST 1331



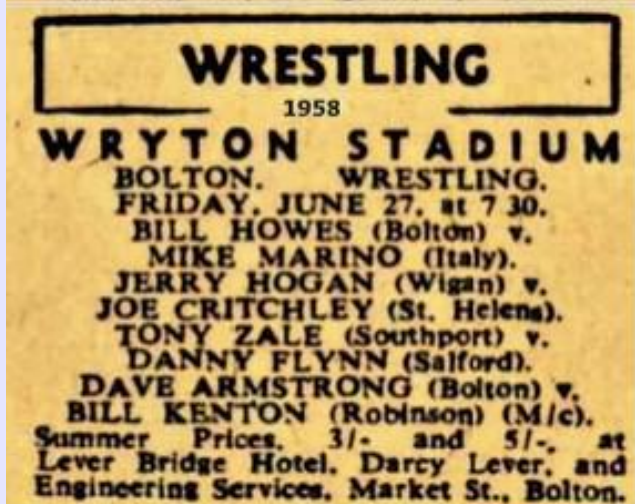
WRESTLING 1955
FREE TRADE HALL, Manchester,
SATURDAY FEB. 26 at 7 p.m.
Doors open 6 p.m.
WRYTON PROMOTIONS, LTD., present
the Finest Wrestling Show Ever in the City
THE ONE AND ONLY
COUNT BARTELLI,
The Undefeated Masked Star.
BLACK BUTCHER JOHNSON (West Indies).
The "La Savante" Expert.
CHRIS LONDOS v. **TOMMY MANN**
(Cyprus) (London)
JACK FAY v. **DENNIS MITCHELL**
(Wigan) (Bradford)
CHIEF THUNDERBIRD,
Ruler of the Sennech Tribe, British Columbia.
v.
RAY APOLLON (Trinidad),
The seventeen-stone Negro Champion.
Admission: 3/- Balcony, 5/- Circle, 6/- Stalls,
7/- Slage.
Tickets available at Forayth's, Deansgate; also
at 153a High St., M/c 13. Tel. RUS 4717.



Ron

Every so often things pop up and it is just another snip of sense or sometimes no sense at all.

Gerry Hogarth Bills are quite rare When i find one I like to get them on hoping William R spots them. Gerry working for Dick Rogers.



We all know Bill Robinson was often Kenton when he started. But look at the sheer nonsense here where someone has billed him as though the Suburb in Manchester is called Robinson.

Robinson, Manchester, you're having a laugh.

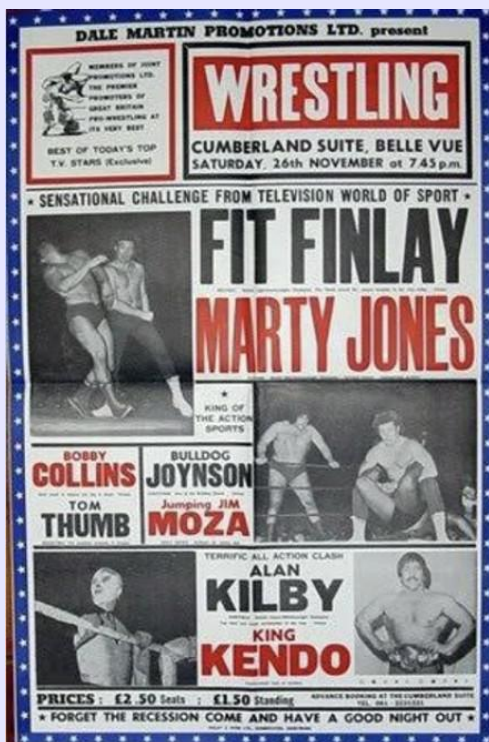
And finally The Blood Tub. Can anyone shed any light on the African Inche. Good challenge for someone like Ost or Sax. Maybe MM has something.



williamr

Thanks for remembering Gerry. He really used to enjoy my taking round your findings of him.

Much appreciated Ron.



Hack

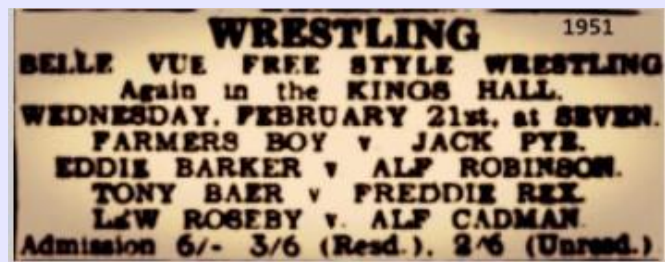
Maybe it was just a reference to kenton being Robinson for those in the know Ron, I don't know. Maybe, lots of maybes, Bartelli only worked for Wryton because of his special relationship with that promotion.

The Belle Vue wrestling we remember was at the Kings Hall, which ended in 1981. But what do those in the know know about the Cumberland Suite, still going in 1983?

Ron

Yes, the circus always stopped the wrestling with the exception of Christmas 1950. On the 20th December Wrestling was held in "The New Exhibition Hall" and twice a week until February 21st when it went back to the Kings Hall.

I wonder what the capacity of the Exhibition hall would have been. 18 shows were put on there whilst the Kings Hall was used for the Circus. In 1951 Belle Vue did over 100 Wrestling Shows due to this.



I can no longer picture some parts of BelleVue. I do remember going into a Hall for Dancelands Disco, certainly big enough for some sort of Wrestling show.

Cumberland Suite rings a Bell and was going still in 1985.

By then I had no idea that Belle Vue was vanishing until I went to The ideal Homes Exhibition one day on the same site.

The Cumberland Suite may have been part of the Elizabethan Ballroom.

Maybe Graham Brook or Main Mask have some memories.

grahambrookjazz

I attended wrestling shows at The King's Hall, Belle Vue, most Saturdays during my sixth form period between 1970-72 and then less frequently between 72-75 when I was a student at Leicester. I started promoting myself in 76 and attended a handful of Crabtree shows until the hall closed down. I only attended one show at The Cumberland Suite and it was a Cassidy show. All I remember is Big Chris fighting Little Chris (Hellcat Haggetty versus Lolita Loren) as the top of the bill.

I well recall my first visit to Belle Vue. I had seen some Wryton shows at The Gaiety Theatre, Rhyl, in summer seasons but had yet to see Mick Mc.Manus live so attended my first ever Morrell and Beresford show towards the end of 1970 with Mc.Manus and Logan topping the bill against The Magyars (Peter Szakacs and Kalmon Gaston). Albert "Rocky" Wall faced Peter Stewart, Johnny Saint fought a fast-moving affair against Mick Mc.Michael and the opener was Deep River versus Andras Swajcsic.

In the winter I attended the circuses. I am a huge fan of clowns and at Belle Vue I saw the great Coco and, when the Moscow State Circus paid a visit, the legendary Oleg Popov. My wrestling attention whilst the circuses were on transferred to The Houldsworth Hall in Deansgate, Manchester, where Cassidy/Carpentier would regularly promote and I would see names that did not appear at Belle Vue including Lord Bertie Topham, klondyke Jake, Orig Williams, Billy Graham, "Romeo" Joe Critchley, Pedro the Gypsy, Melvyn Riss, Majid Ackra and the girls. Many of those were to work for me from 76-87.

I saw many excellent shows at Belle Vue but one which I recall with particular affection was the only appearance at Belle Vue that I witnessed of Maurice La Rue who had the punters eating out of the palm of his hand. Morrell had cleverly teamed him up with Steve Haggetty and they practiced their villainy on the makeshift but extremely effective pairing of Johnny Eagles and Tony St.Clair. In fact,

the entire show was a good one. The main event saw Mick McManus facing Johnny Kwango and the main support featured Brian Maxine versus Jon Cortez. A good solid opener featured Lee Sharron versus Ray Glendenning.

I've had too much time on my hands during this third lockdown and have spent quite a few moments sitting quietly with my cup of tea thinking of all the matches I saw at Belle Vue with the Morrell/Beresford repertory company including Albert Wall, Gwynn Davies, Don Vines, Count Bartelli, Mal Kirk, kendo Nagasaki, Mike Marino, Steve Logan, Johnny Saint, Jim Breaks, Jack Robinson, Leon Arras, Bobby Graham, Steve Haggetty, Colin Joynson, Masambula and so many more.



Ron

It must have been quite something in the old days. I even wonder could the most ardent enthusiast afford to go to every show. Some people loved it, it was such an escape from often a dour life in the factory all week.

Wednesday and Saturday Wrestling was sacrosanct, but so too was Bank Holiday Wrestling. 1951 Easter was an example of what happened every bank Holliday. Five shows in eight days.

Jack Pye did three shows.

My own father-in-law told me Bill Benny was second only to Jack Pye in getting this great crowd going. They loved him.

Old Allan combined an afternoon watching Broughton Rangers with an evening at the wrestling with his mates.

Anglo Italian

Those very regular Manchester bills just go to underline how Graham's repertory list of wrestlers

really darted back and forth all over the country. Kellett seemed domiciled in London; Logan was for ever on in Manchester and L'pool. Kirk, Marino, Haggetty - they were simply everywhere, all the time,

How on earth did they manage all that travelling?

I can only repeat that in 1981 I dragged along some reluctant friends for a show at Belle Vue. Big Daddy topped the bill. Maybe we were in cheap seats, but I can just remember the benches, fairly uncomfortable, and a big oval arena, with lots of pillars. Cold, too. It wasn't a great night, unfortunately. Needless to say, they were not converted.

Ron

You are right Anglo and I saw the Hall almost full circa 1969 to perhaps have less than a thousand at some shows in 1978. The seats were fixed benches and very old.

But if you think that was bad, I am moving on now to a venue called the Blood Tub, Ardwick

Stadium. I am hoping we can solve a mystery or two about this as I have spoken to Hack and we are not entirely sure about the promoter. I always thought it was Wryton. For sure I have Jeff Condor there in 1942 and he was almost exclusively Wryton. In 1950 I note Jim Hussey and Jack Fay (Ernie Riley) and Billy Howes. But the bills don't say. I wonder if MM or Ostie have any memorabilia that could solve this. Whoever the promoter was, he was going head to head with Dick Rogers at Belle Vue on a Saturday night.

But here is my gem for today. What happened to the Stadium and when. Well a detective follows the trail and suddenly the bills in the paper dry up with no reports as to what had happened. A few years later an article about the blood tub talking very much in the past tense of the "Old Days"

Well I have here for you the last bills ever and the following year, the fate of the stadium. See bottom right. Nice to record this on here as I believe it to be a genuine discovery.

<p>WRESTLING 1950</p> <p>ARDWICK STADIUM, SAT. EVENING, JAN. 28. Doors Open 7; Commence 8. Lastest American Heavyweight Tag Wrestling. BILL COVERDALE & BUTCHER COLLINS v. SOUTH AFRICAN INCHE & REX REGAN. BOB MacGREGOR v. BERNARD MURRAY. CHIC CORVEY v. BILL HAROREAVES. Note New Prices: 5/-, 3/6 & 2/-, at 8 p.m.</p>	<p>WRESTLING 4thFeb1950</p> <p>ARDWICK STADIUM. TO-NIGHT. Doors Open 7 p.m. Commence 8 p.m. American Tag Match: PURPLE MASK and ALF JENKINS v. BILL HOUGH and SEAMAN WILKIE. Smashing Heavyweight Contest: JIMMY HUSSEY v. BUDDY BEECH. JOHNNY MACK v. JACK HARRINGTON. JOE REID v. JERRY ADAMS. Prices 5/-, 3/6 and 2/-. Car Park.</p>	<p>WRESTLING 1950</p> <p>ARDWICK STADIUM, Sat. Evg., Feb. 11. Doors open 7 p.m. Commence 8 p.m. AMERICAN TAG MATCH. KILTIE HANNAN & PAT McCANN v. GEO. BUSFIELD & W. HAROREAVES. Two Smashing Heavyweight Contests: GEORGE FINNIE v. AL MORROW STAN GARSIDE v. REX REGAN J. STAFFORD v. DAN FLYNN. Note New Prices: 5/-, 3/6, 2/-. Come Early.</p>
<p>WRESTLING 18thFeb1950</p> <p>ARDWICK STADIUM. SATURDAY, 18th. Doors open 7 p.m., commence 8 p.m. PHIL SIKI v. VAN DUTZ. THE BLACK PANTHER v. AL MORROW. Thrills.—American Team Match.—Thrills. Four Men in the Ring at one time. RON BABER & SEAMAN WILKIE KILTIE HANNAN v. & TOMMY DEMON DARKIE JOHNSON v. BATT. PETE. Prices 5/-, 3/6, 2/-. Come early. Car park.</p>	<p>WRESTLING 1950</p> <p>ARDWICK STADIUM. SAT. MARCH 4. Doors Open 7 p.m. Commence 8 p.m. FIVE SMASHING BOUTS. PHIL SIKI v. GEORGE FINNIE. BUDDY BEECH v. REX REGAN. VAN DYKE v. SEAMAN WILKIE. RON BABER v. DARKIE JOHNSON. JULES LEONE v. TOMMY DEMON. Prices 5/-, 3/6 (bookable), 2/-.</p>	<p>WRESTLING 1950</p> <p>ARDWICK STADIUM. SAT., MARCH 11. Doors Open 7 p.m. Commence 8 p.m. Challenge Match. £25 a-side. JIM HUSSEY v. BUDDY BEECH. American Tag Match: PURPLE MASK & v. BILL HOWTH & GEO BUSFIELD ALP. JENKINS JACK HARRINGTON v. JOHN MACK Prices 5/-, 3/6 (Bkble.) & 2/-. BLA 0713.</p>
<p>ARDWICK STADIUM. Saturday, Mar. 18. Doors Open 7 p.m. 1950 Commence 8 p.m. Two Smashing Heavyweight Contests. PHIL SIKI v. JIM HUSSEY. THE BLACK PANTHER v. VAN DYKE. Terrible American Tag Match. KILTIE HANNAN & TOMMY DEMON v. RON BABER & JOE REID Extra Middleweight Contest. SEAMAN WILKIE v. LOU TAYLOR. Prices: 5/-, 3/6 & 2/-. Tel. BLA 0713.</p>	<p>ARDWICK STADIUM. SATURDAY, MAR. 25 1950. Doors Open 7 p.m. Commence 8 p.m. ANOTHER SMASHING PROGRAMME. GEORGE FINNIE v. PHIL SIKI. PURPLE MASK v. BILLY HOWTH. KILTIE HANNAN v. JULES LEONE. GLYN JONES v. JIM SHIRLEY. Prices 5/-, 3/6 (bookable), & 2/-, BLA 0713. Buses to and from Stadium Every Minute</p>	<p>WRESTLING 1950</p> <p>ARDWICK STADIUM. Saturday, April 1. Doors Open 7 p.m. Commence 8 p.m. ALL-STAR PROGRAMME BLACK PANTHER v. BUDDY BEECH VAN DYKE v. JOHNNIE MACK JACK HARRINGTON v. PETER McCANN BOB SHERRY v. TOMMY DEMON Prices 5/-, 3/6, & 2/-. Tel. ARD 3881. BLA 0713. Buses to & from Stad. every min.</p>
<p>WRESTLING 8thApril 1950</p> <p>ARDWICK STADIUM. TO-NIGHT. Doors open 7 p.m., commence 8 p.m. GEORGE FINNIE v. AFRICAN INCHE. American Tag Match AL. MORROW v. SNOWY WILLIAMS & W. TAYLOR & SEAMAN WILKIE. RON BABER v. BILLY HOWES. PURPLE MASK v. KILTIE HANNAN. Prices 5/-, 3/6, 2/-. ARD 3881, BLA 0713</p>	<p>ARDWICK STADIUM. MONDAY, 17th. Doors Open 7 p.m., Commence 8 p.m. Smashing Return Contest. April 1950 GEORGE FINNIE v. AFRICAN INCHE. American Tag Match. J. HARRINGTON & BOB SHIRLEY v. JOHNNY MACK & GLYN JONES. BRUCE LOCKHART v. JACK FAY Prices 5/-, 3/6, 2/-. ARD 3881; BLA 0713</p>	<p>ARDWICK STADIUM MOTOR AUCTIONS. opp. M/c Hippodrome (ARD 3881). To-morrow at 3.0. To-morrow at 3.0. Enter your Car Now for To-morrow's Sale. Entries accepted up to time of Auction. Buyers galore. Cars collected — Ardwick Stadium Auction. NOVEMBER 1951</p>

Just noticed MM thread on this stadium.

<https://heritagedocs.wixsite.com/talkwrestling/forum/memories-of-the-old-days/the-blood-tub-ardwick-stadium-1942-43>

Unfortunately the Promoters are not mentioned. This as a mystery.

Adrianpollard.shangri-la

By 1942 Top Class Wrestling had been Showing at KINGS HALL BELLE VUE MANCHESTER for a Dozen Years under Lady Promoter KATHLEEN LOOK and was a very Popular and fast-becoming Iconic Venue!

But BELLE VUE had a 'Rival' Arena in MANCHESTER-which put on some Great Shows during the War Years-ARDWICK STADIUM!! Dubbed the 'BLOOD TUB' for the Copious amounts of Claret that were almost 'Obligatory' in every Show-Punters were Treated to Regular and Frequent Events including a BILL.....wait for it.....on NEW YEAR'S DAY 1943!!

Up and Coming Wrestlers like BILLY JOYCE were often present on Weekly Rosters!! ARDWICK STADIUM-and BELLE VUE afforded a Beleaguered and War-Weary Public the Chance to 'Escape' the Worries of a War Torn Nation!

So while the GERMAN 6TH ARMY and 4TH PANZERARMEE were Freezing to Death in the Hell of STALINGRAD-Wrestling Fans were shouting,cheering and booing in another BLOOD TUB at ARDWICK STADIUM MANCHESTER!! Below some very Rare ARDWICK HANDBILLS!

The Programme of Shows....CHRISTMAS DAY 1942!!!-BOXING DAY 1942!!

AFTERNOON

MAN MOUNTAIN BEN
versus
Bulldog BILL GARNON

Mazurki	v	Frank Manto
Jack Wilkinson	v	Bill Macfarland
Carlton Smith	v	Bob Thomas

THE RED DEVIL
versus
BILL McDONALD

EVENING

ROSS McNEILL
versus
VAL CERINO

Costros Astros	v	Pat Kavana
Jack Alker	v	Hal. Parker

JOHNNY DOULAS
versus
BILLY JOYCE

This Programme is subject to Alteration without notice

★ **P.T.O.**

Ardwick Stadium,
opp. New Manchester Hippodrome. Ardwick Green.

All-In Wrestling Programmes

SUNDAY, Dec. 13, 1942.
at 3-15 and 7-30

★ **ATTRACTIVE**
HOLIDAY PROGRAMMES. ★

Xmas Day, Dec. 25,	Fri. Aft. 3-30
Boxing Day, Dec. 26,	Sat. Eve. 6-30
Sun. Dec. 27 as usual	3-15 and 7-30
New Year's Day, Jan. 1,	Fri. Aft. 3-30
Saturday, Jan. 2,	Evening 6-30
Sun. Jan. 3 as usual	3-15 and 7-30

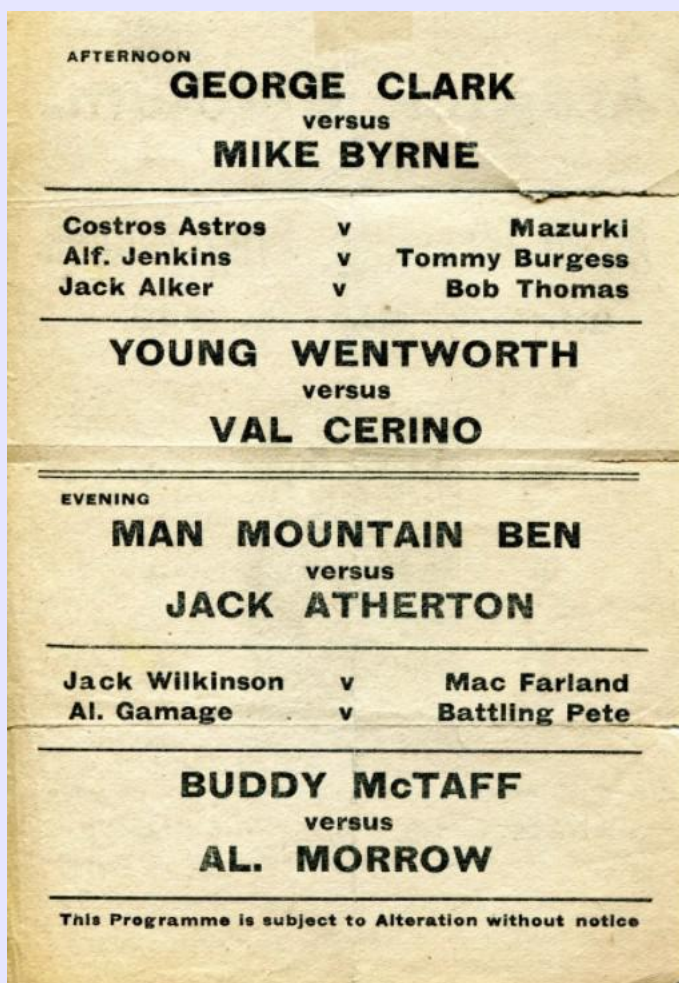
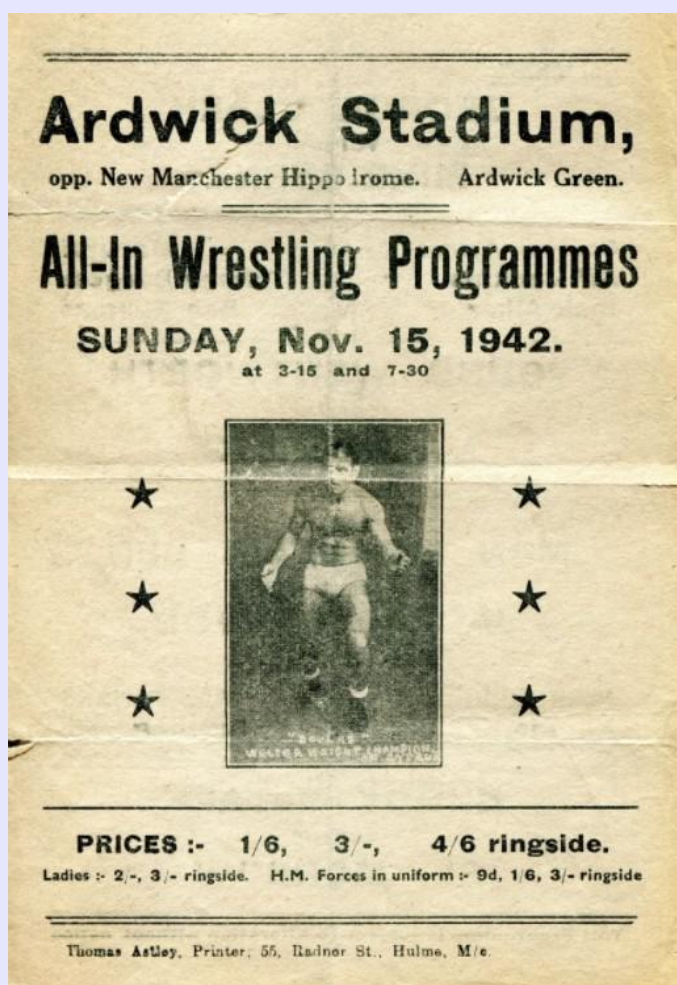
★ **PRICES :-** 1/6, 3/-, 4/6 ringside. ★

Ladies :- 2/-, 3/- ringside. H.M. Forces in uniform :- 9d, 1/6, 3/- ringside

Thomas Astley, Printer, 55, Radnor St., Hulme, M/c.

adrianpollard.shangri-la

How COOL is this??- AFTERNOON AND!! Same Day EVENING SHOWS!!GEORGE CLARK vs. MIKE BYRNE in the AFTO.They'd be Home for Tea!! MAN MOUNTAIN BENNY vs. JACK ATHERTON at NIGHT!!- WOW! Plus SUNDAY Wrestling WOW!--If you could afford it along with BELLE VUE-You were really Spoiled for Wrestling Treats!!



Ron

You can't beat old original stuff , Your collection is like Gold Dust. I am not absolutely sure that Belle Vue had weekly wrestling for most of the 1930's. It had some right from the beginning but I am pretty sure Kath Look only did a handful of years. The other big rival , but again only at the end of the thirties was the Free Trade Hall.

What did stand out for me was that at Ardwick we had inflation 1942/1943. All the prices went up the year after your Programmes. I did not expect that.

The Ost

I wonder if the Beech family was involved. Talent on bills look a bit different than Wryton of the time.

edwinac79

I wrestled at the Cumberland Suite for a Jewish Charity. Good show and a full house; the drawback was that Bernard Manning was the MC. We knew each other and he kept referring to me over the mike as Mr Grecian 2000. I had no comeback! Eddie Rose

Anglo Italian

It's not a big pool of wrestlers, is it Ron? George Finnie, Purple Mask and Billy Howth squeezed in as often as possible. But Jim Hussey and Bernard Murray in there too.

Mind you, this was 1950. The promoters had sorted out the free for all rules, but it was now a case of free for all promoting. Talent and matchmakers were all jostling for their positions; just look how many didn't "make it" to JPs.

Once they had both proper rules and serious promoting sorted out a couple of years later, the business was set to boom.

Thanks for sharing this fascinating set.

Ron

Can't quite see the Beeches running a Manchester venue as I think they lived out St Helens way, but you never know. purple Mask, my tip is Bob Silcock, after all he did Blue and Red and kept getting unmasked, great mentor of Talent though.

So some mystery over promotions at Ardwick, but onto Wryton now on Friday nights. Levenshulme Skating Rink was probably a mile from Belle Vue in Gorton. The sensible thing was to do Friday nights and that they did for at least 1948-1954 where Bartelli was a big star. Covered in my Manchester series but I can now reveal that it came to an end in 1954. Some of the structure was left up to make a sports club, the Levenshulme Sporting Club, that also doubled as a members night club. More about that club and club wrestling later.

The final bills that went in the paper were these.

WRESTLING 1954

LEVENSHULME SKATING RINK
FRIDAY, JUNE 4, at 7.45.
Wryton Promotions Ltd. Present Your
SPECIAL REQUEST CONTEST:
COUNT BARTELLI v. BLACK KWANGO.
MARK HUDSON v. TIGER WOOD.
ALEC BRAY v. CHOPPER CONROY.
TONY MANCELLI v. FRANCIS SULLIVAN

SPECIAL RETURN CONTEST:
JACK BEAUMONT v. RAY KIMBER.
FRED WOOLLEY v. BOB SHERRY.
Admission 7/-, 4/3 (Res.), 2/9 (Unres.).

WRESTLING 1954

LEVENSHULME SKATING RINK
FRIDAY, JUNE 11, at 7.45.
Wryton Promotions, Ltd., present
The Sensational Masked Giant
THE GHOULL (6ft. 2in., 22 stone)
v.
MIKE MARINO.
BLUE FLASH v. JERRY GRANT.
STEFAN MILLA v. RED CALLAGHAN.
GEOFF PORTZ v. BILL HOWES.

WRESTLING 1954

LEVENSHULME SKATING RINK
JUNE 25
WRYTON PROMOTIONS LTD. PRESENT
COUNT BARTELLI v. REX GABLE
STEFAN MILLA v. RED CALLAGHAN
MARK HUDSON v. TIGER WOOD
TERENCE RICARDO v. ALEC BRAY

WRESTLING 1954

LEVENSHULME SKATING RINK
FRIDAY, JUNE 18, at 7.45 p.m.
Wryton Promotions, Ltd., present for
The First Time in Manchester—
JAQUES DUCREZ (France)
v.
BLACK BUTCHER JOHNSON
JOHNNY STEAD v. JOE CRITCHLEY
CHICK PURVEY v. MARK HUDSON
Special Needle Match:
FRANCIS SULLIVAN v.
CHOPPER CONROY



Also bordering Gorton, but on the other side was Openshaw, Wryton were not giving up although they were a bit nomadic with Manchester venues. No doubt their own Stadium in Bolton in 1958 was the eventual answer for Fridays.

But the new home was the Whitworth Hall in Openshaw on the Old Ashton Road. Bartelli in his pomp, Jack Fay (Ernie Riley) and Billy Howes evident. Here are some of the early bills after the switch. So the end of the Skating Rink caused the end of the Wrestling.



edwinac79

Promoter at Cumberland Suite Belle Vue was Harold Weller. Harold ran a number of shows in the area, had a good gym and some very good lady wrestler. Eddie Rose

grahambrookjazz

The name Harold Weller rings a bell. I was given his number by Bobby Barron who recommended a lady wrestler called Goldie Wells whom he had trained. I asked Dave (Bob) for Goldie's number so I

could book her directly but Dave said that I had to go through Weller. I telephoned him but he was very possessive and I realised that I wasn't going to be able to book Goldie Wells without Weller virtually taking over the show so I left it.

edwinac79

Another good lady wrestler of his was was Terri Kruger. Trust you're keeping well Graham. Best wishes. Eddie

grahambrookjazz

Best wishes to yourself also. I'm hating this lockdown. Although I haven't promoted any wrestling since '87, at the time of lockdown last March I was promoting a weekly jazz show in Wilmslow and I really miss putting those on. Also, sadly, the shows played to an older audience and I already know of three who have passed on since this virus took hold. And when things do recommence, will my older audience still have the confidence and the desire to come out again to a live show? The whole thing's a sorry mess!

edwinac79

Cheer Up! Graham things will get better. Best of luck with your Jazz. I'm still in contact with Ian Wilson and Mark Wayne plus a couple of the Scottish lads, the Bryden Brothers (Dale Storm & Bruce Welsh and their younger brother Ian). Everyone else seems to have faded away. My very best wishes and thanks for the bookings you used to give me all those years ago. Eddie Rose

Ron



Know what you mean boys, nothing I liked better than jumping on the train to Liverpool, nice ride, early dinner and into the Cavern Club to listen to live music.

Free if you get in before Miday. It's been a year now and I just don't know how many of those artists may never come back. For as long as I need to wear a mask on a train, I just don't think I will bother.

Moving on, I reported in my Manchester series that the Levenshulme Sporting club had been the Palais Dance Hall, but it is clear from the 1958 Manchester Evening News that the Sporting Club was born out of the Skating Rink, so a little confusion. 1958 was pretty much the first year any wrestling went into the Manchester Night Clubs. The Russell Club in Hulme was a bit earlier, but that was more of a social club than a full blown Cabaret set up. 1958 only had a few shows compared to the Blitz that was to come that lasted until about 1963.

But clearly there had been some experimentation during 1958 before an announcement was made. Wrestling in these clubs had to have a link man, and here is the link revealed. Bill Benny is our man and these are the clubs he was involved with

Grand opening plans and one of the bills the following year.

Members' Notice **1958**
LEVENSHULME SPORTING CLUB
 (Levenshulme Skating Rink).
 962 STOCKPORT ROAD RUS 8822.
OPENING POSTPONED
 UNTIL
MONDAY, DEC. 22.
 WHEN THE CLUB WILL BE
 OFFICIALLY OPENED BY
BOB MONKHOUSE
 STAR OF TV, STAGE, AND RADIO.
 All-star Concerts, Cabarets, Wrestling,
 and Boxing Entirely free to members
 For Membership apply in person
 from 7 to 9 p.m. each evening.
 Membership 10/- per half-year.
 Doors open 7 p.m. **PLEASE COME EARLY**

MEMBERS' NOTICE
LEVENSHULME SPORTING CLUB
 962 Stockport Road, Levenshulme, M/c.
 Telephone RUSholme 8822.
 THURSDAY, JULY 23: **1959**
SENSATIONAL
ALL-STAR WRESTLING
GRAND AMERICAN
TAG MATCH
4 MEN IN THE RING
RED CALAGHAN **JOHN HALL**
 and **BILL OGDEN** v. **YOUNG SANTOS**
LORD BERTIE TOPHAM
 v. **MAURICE DUBOIS.**
ELLIS MORGAN v. FRANKIE SPARKES.
CABARET
 Contrary to queer rumours
 The Glamorous
MAXINE DANIELS
 will definitely appear.
 Entirely free to members.
 Please come early.

You can see examples of two of the other clubs trying wrestling out earlier in the summer of 1958. One assumes it worked and Bill Benny committed to it.

MEMBERS' NOTICE
DEVONSHIRE SPORTING CLUB
 DEVONSHIRE STREET,
 BROUGHTON, SALFORD 7
 (two minutes from Rialto Cinema)
 BRO 1762. BRO 1762.
EASTER MONDAY ATTRACTIONS.
GIGANTIC VARIETY
SHOW
 Including Top-class Television Stars.
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9 1958
ALL-STAR WRESTLING
AND CABARET
THE THRILL OF THRILLS.
THE GHOUL (24½-stone)
 versus
EMIL FOY
 (Welsh Champion)
BOB SHERRY v.
 (Ex-Amateur Champion)
ARTURO MARTINELLI
 (Handsome Italian Star)
COME EARLY. COME EARLY.
 Buses Nos. 1, 24, 73, 95, 96 pass the door.

Members' Notice, **1958**
NORTHERN SPORTING CLUB
 Rochdale Road, Harpurhey.
GRAND HOLIDAY PROGRAMME.
 Sunday, August 3, an. All Week.
COLIN HICKS
AND HIS CABIN BOYS
 Plus 10 Supporting Acts.
 Monday, August Bank Holiday.
 Afternoon Concert, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.
 Evening, Non-stop Variety from 7 p.m.
 All Sessions featuring
 Manchester's Own Singing Star,
TONY HUME
 Monday, August 11.
 Grand All-star Wrestling Show.
THE GHOUL
 (24½-stone terror of the mat)
 v.
PHIL ROLPH
 (17½-stone champion).
GENTLEMAN JIM LEWIS
 (Manchester)
 v.
KENET ERLSA
 (Austria).
 Strictly Members Only.

Somewhere people with money were backing these clubs. The Moss family were involved with others like the Domino club and the College Theatre. It's a tangled web.

I know Jim Lewis was connected to The Dev and I have my suspicions that Bernard Manning may have been tied up with the Northern in Harpurhey.



Bill Benny in 1950.

Clearly some wrestlers liked this night life, Bertie Topham went on to have his own club. Streiger and others like Thornton cut their teeth here. Derek Oldham settled in as Big Mike McGurn and Bomber Bates ended his days on this circuit.

Bill Benny, a flamboyant showman even got some parts in films and loved the girls. For him and Bates it all came to an abrupt end in the early 1960's.

SaxonWolf

Fascinating stuff as always from you lads.

So just to make sure I am understanding this, were the clubs run in a similar manner to traditional working men's cubs, where your entertainment was all free (as long as you were a member) and the drinks were generally cheaper than in pubs?

edwinac79

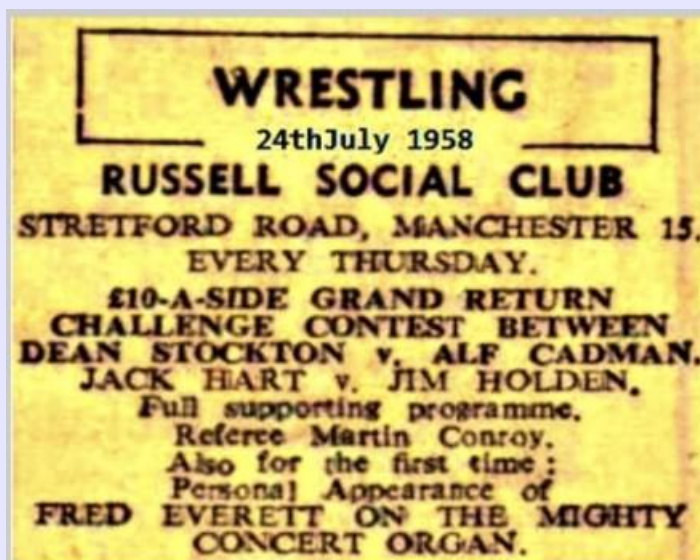
Clubs varied: some were membership only other. private clubs, had varied prices depending on the presentations they put on. Very busy in Manchester area every night of the week with lots of wrestling shows; the promoters I worked for mainly in clubs were Cowboy Jack Cassidy, Josef Szabo, Grant Foderingham, Graham Brooks, Harold Weller, Bertie Topham, Ted O'Leary and several others with more occasional shows. I wrestled at least 3 times a week within 30 minutes of home in Manchester for about 10 years, mainly in clubs with larger halls usually Friday/Saturday nights. Eddie Rose

SaxonWolf

Wrestling three nights a week, plus weekends....you must have had a very understanding wife Eddie!

grahambrookjazz

Ted O'Leary is a name I haven't heard for many a year. The first show I attended at The Houldsworth Hall, Deansgate, Manchester, concluded with a tag match in which villainous coupling Ted O'Leary and Pete Lindberg faced Brendan Moriarty and "Golden Boy" Ian Wilson.



Ron

The Poster with Bob Monkhouse on mentions membership of 10 shilling for half a year. Adverts in general don't mention any prices. I am sure if they had the room and you had the money you could maybe get in. Or maybe a member could sign you in.

Social clubs tended to have cheap beer, but I bet these clubs added a bit on.

You can go in the Cavern in Liverpool and listen to live Music in the daytime for free, but there is easily a pound on a pint.

In a way Wryton formed a template putting wrestling into the Russell Social Club.

Conroy is there so much you could almost suspect it was his patch.

The Russell club did have cabaret later but I am thinking more Organ and Bingo at such a place.

The Roller Rinks were often used in the old days, at Rusholme they even had a Roller Hockey team, but it does not have a big wrestling history.

It looks a strange mix to me and maybe Anglo would have some good theories on what was going on here. For a small time at the end of 1951 they put some wrestling on, but WHO ?

On every bill the main participants had traveled up from the south. It was so Dale Martins. O.k. Co-operation was in the air, but this does seem strange.

Mc Manus came and Kwango, but all the usual suspects, Capelli, Unwin, Stedman, Fisher, Mancelli, Britton, Sparks and more. On any one week they would not all fit in one car. Thursday nights too, but switched to a Monday for Assirati v Garfield. Then the advertising goes missing.....Short venture !!!

SENSATIONAL OPENING PROGRAMME.
BIRCH PARK SKATING PALACE, 1951
 DICKENSON RD., RUSHOLME. RUS 2655.
 Buses 40 and 53 pass door.
THURSDAY, NOV. 29. at 7 30 and
 every Thursday.
PAT CURRY v. BLACK BUTCHER JOHNSON
FRED UNWIN v. ED. CAPELLI.
DON STEDMAN v. MIKE MARINO.
CHARLIE FISHER v. SONNY WALLIS.
 Book Your Seats Now. 7/6, 5/-. 2/6.

WRESTLING 6th Dec 1951
BIRCH PARK SKATING PALACE.
 Dickenson Road, Rusholme. RUS 2655.
 (Buses 53 and 40 to door)
TO-NIGHT, at 7 30 p.m.
PAT O'REILLY v. TONY MANCELLI
MIKE MARINO v. DE-JAGER
GEORGE KIDD v. JACK CUNNINGHAM
MICK McMANUS v. JACK SANTOS
 Admission 7/6, 5/-. 2/6.

WRESTLING 1951
BIRCH PARK SKATING PALACE.
 Dickenson Road, Rusholme. RUS 2655.
 Another Stupendous Programme.
Thursday December 13. at 7 30 p.m.
PAT CURRY v. DON STEDMAN
CHARLIE FISHER v. BLACK KWANGO
JACK DEMPSEY v. PADDY KLOKE
BIG BOY SCOTT v. RAY HUNTER
 Admission 7/6, 5/-. 2/6. This is last
 show 1951. Watch for 1952 opening.

WRESTLING 1952
BIRCH PARK SKATING PALACE, Dickenson
 Road, Rusholme. Tel RUS 2655. Buses
 40 and 53. **Monday, Jan. 7, at 7 45**
BERT ASSIRATI (official Heavywt. Champ
of Great Britain) v. ALAN GARFIELD.
DE-JAGER v. NORMAN THOMAS.
STEVE LOGAN v. ARTHUR SPARKS.
BLACK KWANGO v. LEN BRITTON.
 Tickets : 7/6, 6/-. 4/-. 2/-.



And I love to track down these places. Renovated and turned into a row of shops.

edwinac79

Gentleman Jim Lewis lived about 100m down the road on the same side. He promoted many club shows in Manchester area in late '50s to mid-'60s. He was very helpful in my early days in wrestling and introduced me to other promoters e.g. Jack

Atherton, Bertie Topham and Jack Cassidy.

Hack

This is a riveting thread, thank you Ron. I think Bartelli only worked for Wryton in his early days, for reasons previously alluded to. It's interesting to see Belle Vue and the Free Trades Hall on the same night. If only we could get an insight into Dick Rogers relationship with Joint.

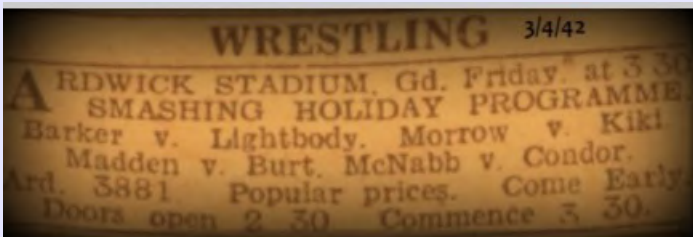
Thanks for all the replies about the Cumberland Suite - it was news to me as I thought Belle Vue wrestling had gone for good with the closure of the Kings Hall.

Excellent research on the club Ron. Great topic.

I've just looked in "They Called Him the Count." Bartelli says the promoter at Ardwick Stadium during the war (he's specifically referring to the period up to 1942 when he joined up) was Sammy Cohen, and Cohen put on a Sunday afternoon and evening show.

Ron

Cohen was a boxing promoter. But I think Bartelli's author has twisted the name it is Sammy Cowan. Cowan must have owned the Stadium as he brought boxers and trainers in there to train three days a week. Yes he was there to the bitter end when the car lot took over, so considering those times, he may well have kept the wrestling all those years especially if a booker could do all the work for him. His name does not seem to appear on either boxing or wrestling adverts. He looks a strong bet. Worth consideration until we get our hands on some vital memorabilia.



Here is the Count.

Lee Cowen

Hi there. I came across your page when I did a search for Sam Cowan. For accuracy his surname was spelled COWEN, like mine. He was my great uncle. My dad is still alive and he could tell you more although his recollections are quite sketchy. Ardwick stadium was run by Sam, my grandfather Louis Cowen, Maurice Cowen, Joe Cowen, possibly David Cowen too. I know David's son Leon is still alive and might have more details. He said he went to the event every Sunday afternoon. Another family member Myra Cowen did the catering. It was very much a family run event. He doesn't know the reason they moved it to Bolton but he remembers it.

Ron

Love to see a picture of the stadium.

Further info on Sam Cowan is that Morrell did not have Cossington Street baths in Leicester as early as we thought. Cowan was the promoter in 1946, but again preferring not to put his name on the bills. All those 1946 bills in the gallery are Cowan Bills. This proves he was a wrestling Promoter so pretty sure he was the man at Ardwick now.

Source, several instances where he pushed wrestling in the paper in Leicester.(1946)

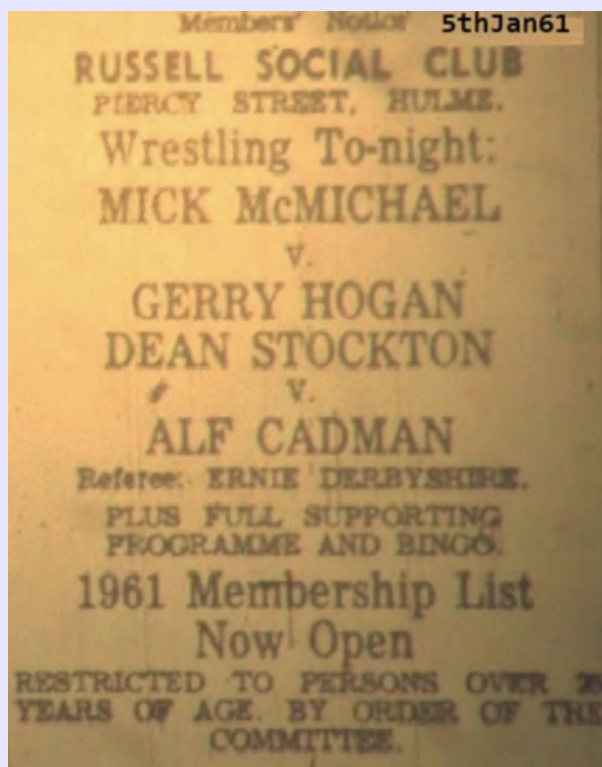
Hack

Good work Ron. Life would have been much easier, but not half as much fun decades later, if wrestling had not been so secretive.

bkendo1

I'm trying to get some info in the blood tub from few remaining with any recollection, I remember being told by Bartelli it paid well but was hard. Beech had some connection with Ardwick on organisation side so did a guy who ran the gym in Leigh it was at that gym I heard stories about the blood tub, the Leigh gym lad was working with the guy off Hagfold Atherton who lost a lot of venues to Wryton was this a small scale northern version of Lincoln coup. I'll do my memories of the club's another day Ernie Derbyshire ran a few in Manchester and wanted to referee, Wryton frowned on this. Said Ernie is the guy referenced in the quality st gang I'm sure Eddie will remember him.

I have heard Ernie Derbyshire ran the Russell club even though to me Conroy seems more prominent. Here is Ernie as ref there for Wryton.

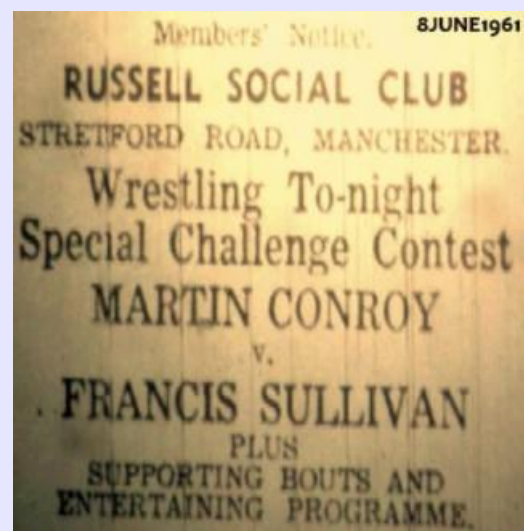
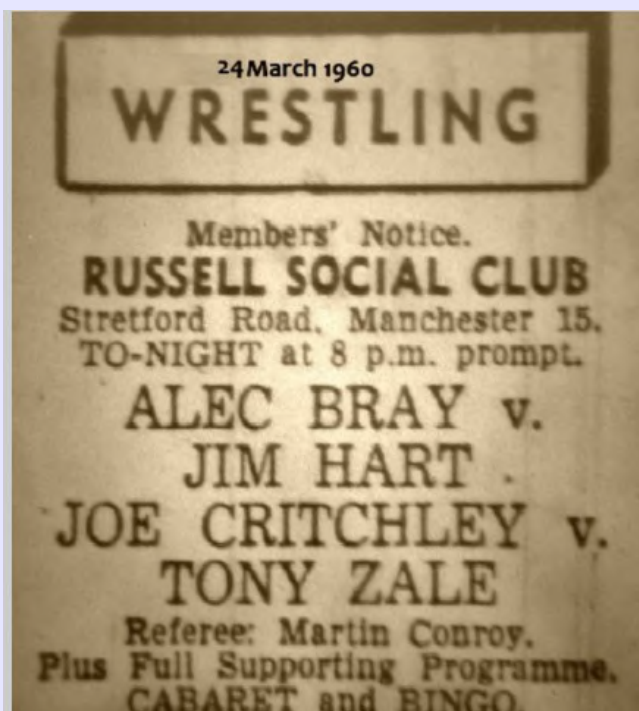


edwinac79

I did a couple of shows at the Russell Club and yes Ernie refereed. The wrestling was Wryton Promotions and Martin Conroy (a very helpful friend) seemed to be Arthur Wright's Number Two. I did a couple of long Butlins trips that started at midnight from Wryton's office. Martin was the organiser and Arthur Wright came down from his quarters above the office, resplendent in black silky dressing gown, to see us off on the trip. Incidentally at that time early in my career Wrytons had me billed at Wat Tyler! Eddie Rose.

Ron

Makes sense to me about Conroy, He was ref on a big proportion of shows and was still turning out sometimes. He had to be the main man.



Ron

Going back to Ardwick I have no 1930's bills which led me to believe that the Blood Tub only began about the time of the war. How wrong I was, having now found regular wrestling in 1934. The promoter indeed was Sam Cowan, looks like he had a minimum sixteen year run there. This article gives a flavour of the times.

Slowly we have chipped away on this thread revealing the fate of some of these old Manchester Stadiums and a bit more about a few more.

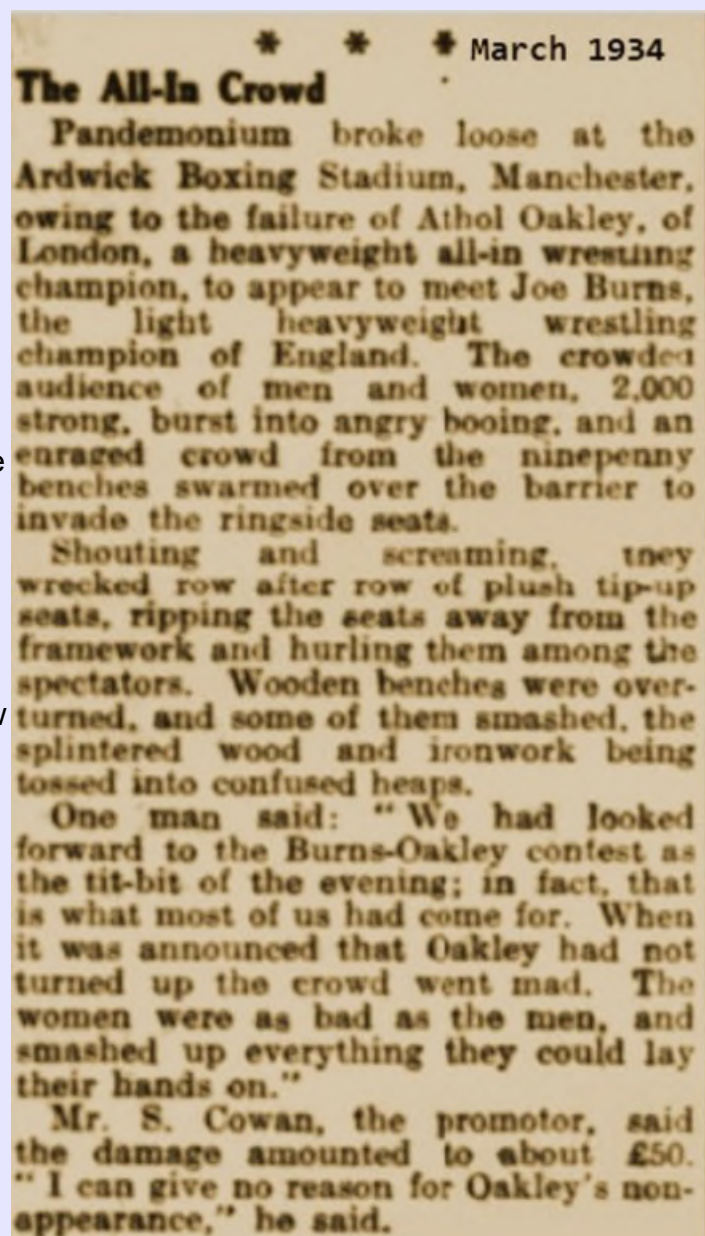
Found boxing also in 1933.

Anglo Italian

Manchester 1937

A great scrap with an intently focused audience.

Who are the wrestlers really going at it here?



Can anyone identify the venue?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JAoyTF-BRPc>

Ron

Belle Vue and Jack Sherry v Kola Kwariani

Hack

Excellent Ron. Sounds like Saturday morning at the pictures.

ruslan-pashayev

any mention of the BELLE VUE CUP/TROPHY?