

# My Wrestling Journey



*The travels of Our Man from Down Under*

# John Shelvey

*Part 18*

# *British Wrestling Royalty Comes Down Under*



*'There'll always be an England and England will be free'*

Written and composed by Ross Parker and Hughie Charles.

Sung by Vera Lyn and Tiny Tim and the Sex Pistols. I kid you not!



I can only think, that Jim Barnett had read, been told, or had sensed that Australians were somewhat 'prickly' when it came to the subject of the 'motherland'. I noticed this myself in the early eighties, when I worked out of the Alfred Dunhill Showrooms in Sydney. The war over the Falkland Islands was received with little enthusiasm and our showroom windows were covered in anti British posters one evening. Even my best Aussie mate gave me a hard time over the conflict.

However, I didn't sense any of this feeling in the late 60s at a time when Sydney appeared to be a raging hot-pot of nationalities who in the (real) world of labourers,

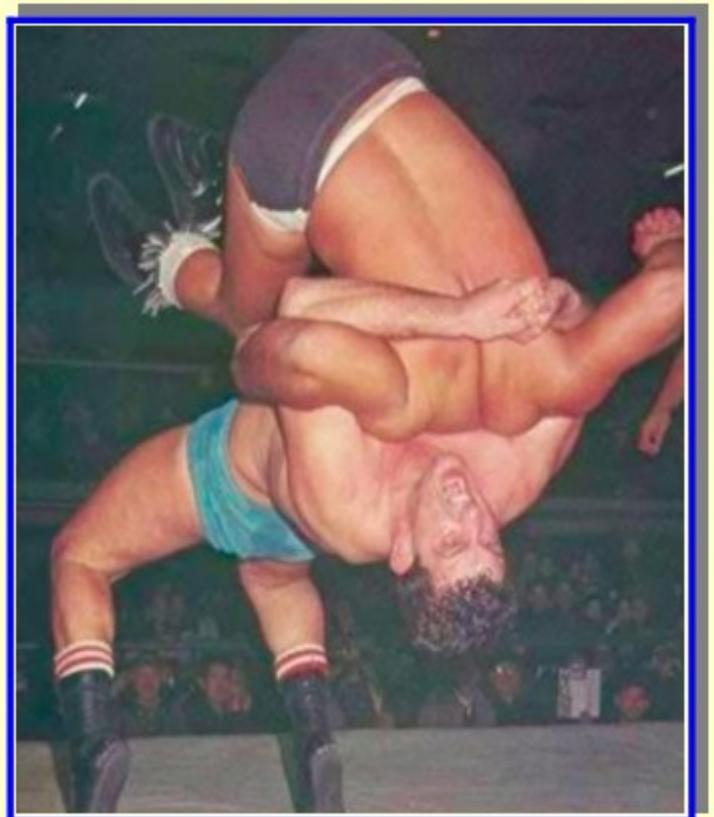
tradesmen and shopkeepers worked and lived side by side. Maybe

because Barnett was introducing an English wrestler

who was going to be pushed all the way to the top title, at a time when Australia had not got its own Aussie idol, he felt that Billy might be

received by the local wrestling public with little enthusiasm.

So when it was said to Billy, that he was from Manchester England, but in fact originally from Bondi, Sydney Australia, Bill confirmed the fib. I was for a short while, dumbstruck that Bill would go along with this abomination, but then reasoned that this was wrestling, I'd been a spectator of the American version for around five years and shouldn't be shocked or even suprised at the shenanigans that went on. I was pleased that almost immediately the untruth was dropped, as I never heard Billy introduced as hailing from anywhere else other than Manchester, again. However, I have to say the t.v. audience in Sydney was somewhat confused with Bill's first performance when he took on the clean-cut, rule adhering local Larry O'Day. As the short match reached its climax, Billy closing in on the predictable win, used a forearm smash and his favourite back-breaker across the knee, to incapacitate his opponent. To an Aussie crowd who saw



very few scientific matches, they would be of the opinion that forearms and knees were only used by bad guys or, good guys ON bad guys, so Bill's win was met with muted applause. However they soon warmed to Billy as he scythed through the clutch of the promotions' villains, using holds and moves that bewildered the bad guys and delighted the crowds and further more he could dish out the rough stuff if needed.



You can clearly see Karl, they've given ME top billing

Bill had already been the Heavyweight King of Britain and Europe and had also won the inaugural IWA title in Japan. On Friday 31st. of October 1969, Billy annexed the Australian, World Championship Wrestling (I.W.A.) World title, beating Killer Karl Kox two falls to nil in a brilliant display of mat wrestling. If I remember correctly he won the second fall with either a suplex and bridge or a folding press and bridge and I was thrilled to have witnessed his performance that night. (I don't recall but apparently Spike Robson was in the opener). Luckily for us, there is plenty of Billy on the Internet for us to enjoy, albeit mostly later in his career when he was carrying extra avoir du pois which it has to be said, didn't stop him from continuing to drop-kick and throwing himself over the top rope for our entertainment. Neither Billy or the other master tactician Karl Gotch were ever made N.W.A. or even A.W.A. singles champion, but that's just the Americans in America looking after themselves.



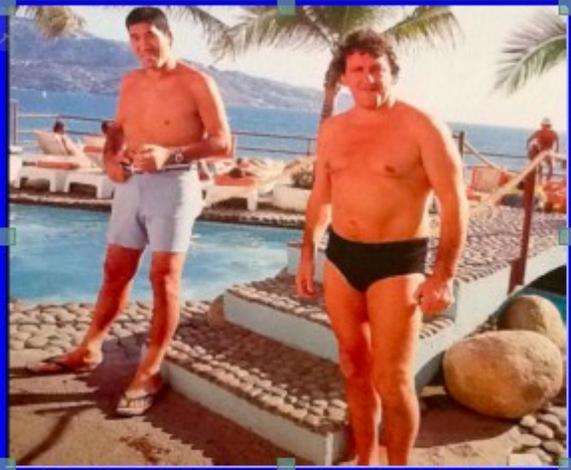
George and Bill. Their opponents have scarpered!

I recently watched a Robinson v Inoki match that is on the NJPW web-site and it wasn't the most exciting match I've ever seen, but it would be the hardest match I've seen, with both men seemingly putting every last ounce of effort into every hold and move they used. (the Inoki equaliser looks a bit soft in comparison to all that goes before it). Looking at the small number of pages it has, I thought I would be

disappointed with Bill's book, but it is a very good read and it's just a shame that someone didn't do an all encompassing book on Billy's career. Long live the King!



A giant, an almost naked man and a fat masked man in sandals. Strange bedfellows Bill.



Bill with, probably his favourite boss, Shohei.