

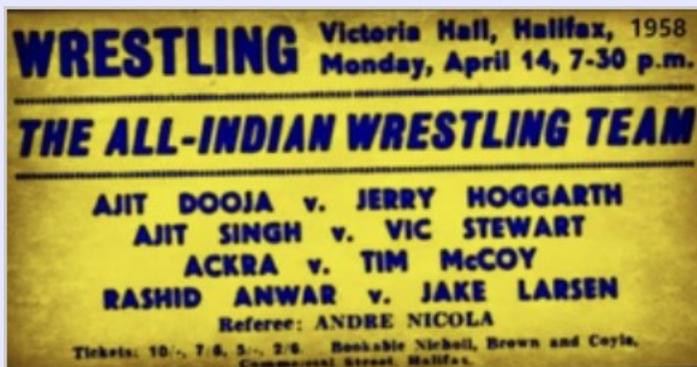
Ron's Wrestling Ramblings

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Halifax

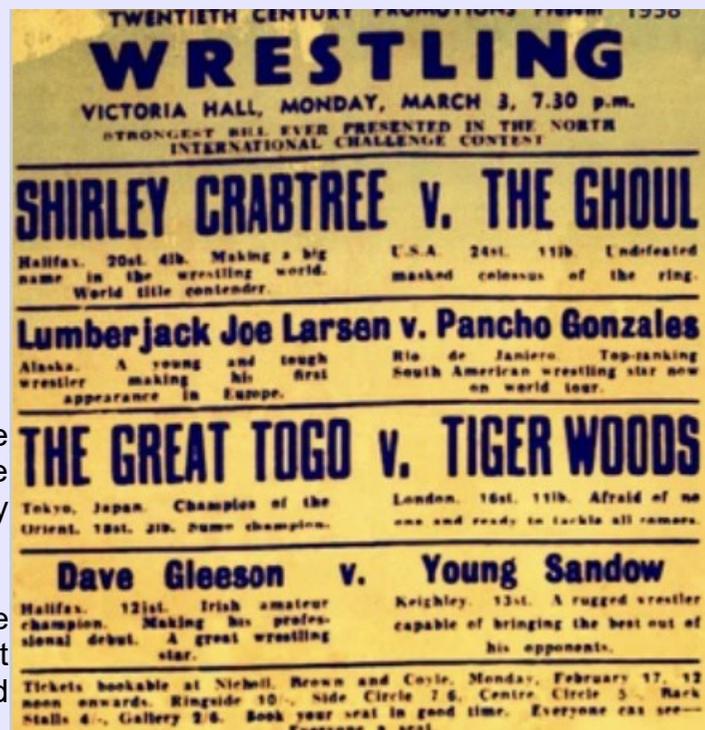
Ron

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.

Well both the Ghoul and Shirley forced submissions out of each other before the bout ended in pure chaos. Shirley was out of the ring when he struck the Ghoul and the Ghoul was out cold. The ref was Mitchell Gill who declared a "no contest." The crowd were booing and the local press managed to get an explanation. Gill claimed that these promotions did Association rules which were similar to Mountevans, but as Shirley has not fouled previously, he could not be disqualified for a first foul. He had to be on a warning. There was no count out of the Ghoul who could not continue as it had been a foul so that was it.

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.

THE PREMIER BRITISH WRESTLING PROMOTERS

Twentieth Century Promotions
VICTORIA HALL, HX., MONDAY, March 24
at 7-30 p.m. 1958
 A GALAXY OF INTERNATIONAL WRESTLING STARS

BATTLE OF THE GIANTS

MAN MOUNTAIN vs. BILL BENNY I. SHIRLEY CRABTREE
 California 1944. Has issued a challenge to Crabtree and laid down 4100 pounds. The toughest and toughest grappler in the heavyweight division. In 1945 Crabtree has outwrestled him 10 to none and is certain to win this long run without defeat.

ENRICO GARIBALDI I. Mr. UNIVERSE
 Heavyweight Champion of Italy 1941-42. Has sportingly stood down to enable Crabtree to accept the challenge from Benny. A great wrestler with a great record.

IVAN The Terrible I. JIM FOY
 Russia 471 lbs. 224 7/8. The international wrestling champion. Has to be seen to be believed. Few stronger men have ever laid the mat and very few have withstood the famous bear but of the mighty wrestler.

JOE KEGAN I. ARTURIO MARTINELLI
 Berkshire 121 lbs. One of the fighting Kegan's.

Please note seating arrangements: Stage 10/- The whole of the Circle 7/6 Area (Front and Back Stalls) 5/- Gallery 2/6

Hundreds failed to get into the Hall on March 2. Avoid any such mishap this time by booking your seat at Nicholl, Brown and Coyle. Tickets available Tuesday, March 11, and onwards.

WRESTLING 1958

Victoria Hall, Halifax, Monday, April 28, at 7.30 p.m.
THE FIGHT THE FANS HAVE WAITED FOR
 The One and Only Sensational From the Land of the Rising Sun

Shirley Crabtree v. The Mighty Togo

17 stone Halifax. The mightiest man in wrestling. Has defeated the greatest in this country and is acknowledged Britain's leading world title challenger. His massive physique attracted millions of TV viewers recently. Welcomes this change to wrestle the great Oriental Champion.

18 stone Tokyo, Japan. Same and Judo Champion. Famous throughout the Far East. Undefeated in his European tour. Leaves England at the end of the month and hopes to crown his achievements by a K.O. victory over Crabtree.

MAX CRABTREE v. ENRICO GARIBALDI.
IVAN THE TERRIBLE v. BIG DUTCH SCHULTZ.
VIC STEWART v. AJIT SINGH. SWEENEY v. SPARKS.

TICKETS: 10/-, 7/6, 5/- and 2/6. On sale now at Nicholl, Brown and Coyle, Halifax. Don't leave it too late if you intend seeing this great bill.

TED BERESFORD Presents

WRESTLING
VICTORIA HALL, HALIFAX
MONDAY, DECEMBER 8 1958
COMMENCE AT 7.30 P.M.

ALAN GARFIELD v. SANDY ORFORD
 (Australia) (Wales)

NORMAN WALSH v. Judo AL HAYES
 (Middlesbrough) (Westminster)

JOHNNY CZESLAW v. DON MENDOZA
 (Hungary) (Well-known in Huddersfield)

AL MIQUET v. AL NICOL
 (Huddersfield) (Nottingham)

Prices of Admission: 7/6, 5/- and 3/-

Seats bookable at Nicholl, Brown and Coyle, Commercial Street, Halifax
 Phone Halifax 3986

One observation on the Beresford Morrell partnership is that it seems here in Halifax Ted played a lone hand. Did you notice Garfield working here, I am sure you did. Maybe he travelled with Al Hayes.

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

382 Cadet Field Regiment R.A. (DWE) Social & Welfare Fund
WRESTLING at the DRILL HALL, PRESCOTT ST., Halifax
Friday, November 7, 1952, at 7.30 p.m.

PROGRAMME

Sensational Heavyweight Contest DAVE STARR (Israel) v. JIM ANDERSON (Scotland)	Special Challenge Contest TED BERESFORD (Huddersfield) v. MIKE DELANEY (Ireland).
Extra Special Challenge Contest JOHNNY STEAD (British Lightweight Champion) v. TONY LAWRENCE (Scotland).	Grand Cruiserweight Bout DEREK TURNER (Hull K.R. Forward) v. VINCE ERNSHAW.

PRICES OF ADMISSION: RINGSIDE SEATS (Numbered and Reserved) 8/-; AREA 2/6. Tickets may be obtained from the following: Messrs. Nicholl, Brown and Coyle, Commercial Street, Halifax, Tel. No. 3986 Halifax; and from Mr. L. Stott, 23, Union Street South, Tel. No. 4478 Halifax; or from Cadet H.Q., Hunger Hill, on Wednesday and Thursday evenings, November 5th and 6th, from 8.0 p.m. to 9.30 p.m. Tel. No. 60024 Halifax.

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.

TWENTIETH CENTURY PROMOTIONS
present
WRESTLING, VICTORIA HALL, HALIFAX,
THURSDAY OCTOBER 13, at 7-30 p.m. 1960
THE SENSATION OF THE CONTINENT
QUASIMODO
THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME
v.
MAX CRABTREE
HALIFAX FACES THE BIGGEST TEST OF HIS CAREER
Directly in line for the British Light-heavyweight Title Contest

CATCHWEIGHT CONTEST KNOWLES-PETERS (Leeds) v. BERNARD MURRAY (Bradford)	CATCHWEIGHT CONTEST ERIC SANDS (Bradford) v. AL MIQUET (Nottingham)
HEAVYWEIGHT CONTEST TONY ZALE (Wigan) v. DON MENDOZA (Huddersfield)	MIDDLEWEIGHT CONTEST BILL TUNNEY (Preston) v. BILLY STIRLING (Scotland)

SEATS BOOKABLE AT NICHOLL, BROWN AND COYLE, COMMERCIAL STREET, HALIFAX.
7/6 CIRCLE AND STAGE, 5/- AUDITORIUM, 2/- BALCONY (ON NIGHT ONLY)
WHEN BOOKING, PLEASE ASK FOR THE "TWENTIETH CENTURY" PLAN

When he came back as the Guardsman I did not think he was that bad. The Winsford televised match with Naggars 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.

TWENTIETH CENTURY PROMOTIONS
 present
WRESTLING, VICTORIA HALL, HALIFAX, 1960
MONDAY, OCTOBER 31, at 7-30 p.m.
 ANOTHER TRENDING PROGRAMME
SHIRLEY CRABTREE
 HALIFAX British and European Heavyweight Champion v.
BIG BILL COVERDALE
 AUSTRALIA 6ft. 2 1/2 in. Toughest wrestler in British Empire.
 Has worked a long time for this contest.
MIDDLEWEIGHT CONTEST
 Ezzard Hart (Barbados) v. Big Tommy (Preston)
HEAVYWEIGHT CONTEST
 El Madro Castellon (Portugal) v. George Harris (Preston)
MIDDLEWEIGHT CONTEST
 Young McAllister (Sturminster) v. Doug Williams (Wales)
INTERNATIONAL MIDDLEWEIGHT CONTEST
 Former Middleweight British Champion of Europe
CHARLES HUMEZ
 FRANCE. One of the greatest fighters of all time.
 Fought Ray Robinson, Gene Palmer, Tarzan, Shultz, etc. v.
KNOWLES-PETERS
 LEEDS. British Middleweight Champion.
 7 1/2 Circle and 8 1/2 in. Middleweight. Fights on site at Nichol, Brown
 and Coys, Commercial Street, Halifax. When booking please ask for
 the "Twentieth Century Plan." £1- at the door on night only.
YOU ARE STRONGLY ADVISED TO BOOK AT ONCE.




CHARLES HUMEZ **SHIRLEY CRABTREE**

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.

BULA'S CHALLENGE ACCEPTED
£1,000 IF UNMASKED
 Can **SHIRLEY CRABTREE** succeed where many giants have failed?
TWENTIETH CENTURY PROMOTIONS present
WRESTLING
 Victoria Hall, Halifax, Monday, February 6, 7.30 p.m.
 CHALLENGE CONTEST 1961
THE GREAT BULA
 6ft. 11in. 1st. 8lb. Powerful masked wrestler who challenged Crabtree from the ring on January 10
SHIRLEY CRABTREE
 Halifax, 6ft. 2 1/2 in. 194 lb. British and European Heavyweight Champion
GREAT SUPPORTING BELL
KITO TANI (Japan) v. **DAVE SHILLITO** (Bristol) v. **FRED von LOTTER** (North Africa) v.
ROGER GREEN (Preston) v. **FRANK PRICE** (London) v. **TONY GRAZIANA** (Italy)
CATCHWEIGHT CONTEST
CYRIL KNOWLES (Leeds) v. **TOMMY HOLTEN** (London)
THE GREAT BULA
 Shirley Crabtree Very confident in his home town
 7 B. S. - Seats bookable at Nichol, Brown & Coys, Commercial St., Hx. When booking please ask for the "Twentieth Century Plan." £1- at the door only




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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