



**The Lost Wrestling Halls of Britain**

### **frank thomas**

Apologies fellow members, if this subject has appeared before. But earlier today, I was early for an appointment, and took a walk around where the Liverpool stadium stood. Its a car park now, with no signs of its former glories, wrestling was held there every Friday night, and I attended virtually every week 1972/1977. It set me thinking: how many of these halls that held our weekly/fortnightly/monthly/seasonal "fix" are gone? Where was yours? Is it still standing, or just a memory? Opinions, memories good and bad thanks

### **Tom H**

The last time I went past Ilford Baths it was all boarded up. The other venue I went to was The Barking Assembly Hall, occasionally the wrestling was broadcast live on tv on a Saturday afternoon. The building was gutted and turned into the Broadway Theatre, it still has wrestling on now and then.

### **Ron Historyo**

Belle Vue Manchester and Wryton Stadium Bolton for me and both closed round about 1982.

Before it started to wane Belle Vue was wonderful. Bolton was in need of much investment, an old cinema, but some of the bills were fantastic.

As a Manchester lad I also travelled down the East Lancs Road to Liverpool Stadium a few times in the early 1970's and enjoyed it. It was the only stadium I saw that had a really top class looking ring like Belle Vue.

Frank , I wonder if you appreciate the history of your Liverpool Stadium and who started it all.

This weekend I will put a gallery on of War Time Bills at Liverpool. Real Nostalgia.

### **frank thomas**

Good evening Mr hystorio! I do indeed appreciate the history of Liverpool stadium, having watched wrestling, boxing, (pro and amateur) bit young for the "rock era" but it was also the home to chipperfields circus for a few weeks! Two good books which cover the rise and demise of the stadium are "played in Liverpool" And "Liverpool's boxing venues". People more in the know than myself still mourn the loss of the stadium almost 30 years on! One highly respected figure in Liverpool describing it as: "the greatest sporting crime of the 20th century no less!" On a lighter note, I had the life pestered out of my dad to take me to belle vue on a Saturday, but as he worked as a long distance lorry driver, his

response was: "I've been driving all week!" Look forward to your next contribution, war time bills! Thanks. P.S. remember my dad and uncles telling me that the war time shows were held on Sunday afternoon.

### **powerlock**

St James Hall was my first venue but ceased by 1968, then onto Newcastle City Hall, Whitley Bay Rex Hotel who have announced they are ceasing trading this week, also Londonderry Hall in South Shields which I believe is also gone,

### **Hack**

My venues:

Public Hall, Preston - mostly demolished, remainder a Wetherspoons pub.

Queens Hall (Sault St Baths), Preston - Closed 1991, now site of the courts.

Guild Hall, Preston - Still going strong (only opened 1972).

Town Hall, Chorley - Still open I think.

King Georges Hall, Blackburn - Still going.

Belle Vue, Manchester - Closed

Floral Hall, Southport - I think it's still going.

Tower, Blackpool - Still open

Central Pier, Blackpool - Still open

Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham - Now a music venue.

Kings Club, Great Barr, Birmingham - Don't know.

Civic Hall, Wolverhampton - Still going, but temporarily closed for refurbishment.

### **frank thomas**

Strangely enough, an old friend of the family boxed at Preston public hall in the early 1950s a professional, he always said for some reason, he got paid more for boxing at Preston than anywhere. Southport floral hall, I am reliably informed does still occasionally host wrestling, think it might be all star.

### **Sapper James**

Peterborough Werrina - long gone.

### **rasit huseyin**

Hackney Town Hall - Building still there

Hackney Empire - My father was a regular there in the '60's, the buiding is still there

Islington Town Hall - Building still there

Battersea Town Hall - Now an arts centre

Hornsey Town Hall - My local as a kid, now an arts centre just like Battersea

Walthamstow Assembly Hall - Still there

Picketts Lock Centre, Edmonton - My local from 1988 onwards, building was pulled down in 2002 and replaced with a new swimming pool and a multiplex cinema. I also remember the sewage farm that was around the corner from Picketts Lock, it didn't half stink when you passed it going to the hall!

Pavillion, Alexandra Palace - A regular wrestling venue from 1982-87, but was pulled down in the early '90's and now the empty land doubles up as a spot for funfairs on Bank Holidays, or as a car park.

Happy memories indeed.

### **rasit huseyin**

Other halls I attended

Fairfield Hall, Croydon - Still going strong

Lewisham Concert/Lewisham Theatre, Catford - Building still there, now known as the Broadway Theatre

Tottenham Town Hall - Now an arts centre

Brent Town Hall, Wembley/Wembley Arena - Still there

Wembley Conference Centre - Closed down, can't remember what it's called now

Townhouse Nightclub, Enfield - The worst wrestling venue I've ever been to. Very small, only three sides of the hall had seating, and the other side had a wall that was pretty close to the ring. Spectators were also not allowed to sit at ringside because the ring was much too close to the front row, and any wrestler that was thrown out of the ring would land on top of you for sure. The Townhouse was pulled down in the mid 2000's, and had a road built in its place, which is a one-way system.

### **SaxonWolf**

Sheffield City Hall - still open, still has bands on, but no wrestling

### **David Mantell**

Lewisham Concert/Lewisham Theatre, Catford - Building still there, now known as the Broadway Theatre

Recently revived by All Star.

Tottenham Town Hall - Now an arts centre

Is this T-Chances we're on about? I think they may have the odd indie New School show in the main theatre (not the front bar where all the punk bands play since the demise of the 12 Bar in Soho).

### **rasit huseyin**

No, this place was near the Tottenham College on Tottenham High Road, also known as Tottenham Baths, there were occasional shows there in the '70s I think it's now called (or part of it is) the Bernie Grant Arts Centre

### **John Shelvey**

Couldn't believe it when they pulled down the Brighton Stadium where I had seen my first live wrestling. Then the Sydney Stadium which was steeped in Boxing and wrestling history and one that I visited regularly from 64 to 71/72. At Brighton I had seen the likes of Gordienko, Cornelius, Garfield, Starr, Hoffman and Bence. Too many to mention at the SS but Robinson, Gotch, Kowalski, Lewin, Stevens, Sammartino, Brisco and Funk Jnr, to name just a few.

### **frank thomas**

Hello John, remember my uncle, a seafarer telling me he saw the great aboriginal world boxing champion, Lionel Rose, box at Sydney stadium! Lionel will always have an inextricable link with my home city of Liverpool, as he defended his world crown against one of Liverpool's "finest" the late Alan Rudkin...

### **frank thomas**

Sapper, was the Wirrina stadium the scene of the premature untimely tragic loss of 'tornado' Billy Toronto's?

## **Sapper James**

Yes. One of my pub mates was with the St. John ambulance crew that night.

## **John Shelvey**

The day Lionel fought Rudkin I was at Luna Park, a famous Sydney fun fair! Rose was just one of the very good Aboriginal boxers of the past. Dave Sands was probably the pick of the crop. Boxing was huge in Aus. and had been for a century or more and then an overseas boxer was killed in the ring in the 70s and there was a tremendous backlash and it virtually disappeared for a long time even though Aus. continued to produce World Champions. It's pretty low key these days and gets little publicity unless Danny Green or Anthony Mundine are involved.

## **forearmsmash**

The Winter Gardens Bournemouth, a 2000 seater venue. Sadly now a car park

## **Duncan**

Gaiety Cinema Taunton. Site of new apartments.

Burton Place Drill Hall Taunton. No Wrestling but still used by Terretorials.

Blake Hall Bridgwater. Now the Bridgwater Liberal Club.

Gaumont Cinema Taunton. Has been Bingo Hall for many years.

County Hotel ballroom Taunton. Now Marks and Spencer.

Civic Hall Exeter. Now shopping centre.

Colston Hall Bristol. Still a major concert venue.

Bath Pavilion. Not sure - perhaps David Franklin can tell us.

## **Bernard Hughes**

Do we have anyone on this site that can tell us what happened to the wrestling hall at Farrer Street, Middlesbrough or The Engineers hall in Hartlepool please ?

## **I Pringle**

Hi Bernard, Farrer St stadium was forced to close because it was said to be unsafe and was duly condemned and demolished.

## **powerlock**

Hello Bernard, there was an engineers club and club grounds in Hartlepool, There is still an engineers club in Raby Street Hartlepool, I don't know if this is a new club or the place you were enquiring about

## **Bernard Hughes**

Thanks to Ian and powerlock. I asked about Farrer street stadium, because they held wrestling there on a Saturday night whilst I was near there in the RAF 1955-6.

At the time I was training at St. Lukes Hospital. We wrestled for a charity for training Guide Dogs for the Blind. I think that one of the founders had a particular interest there.

I nearly wrestled at Farrer Street, due to meet Dicky Swailes, but had to call off as I couldn't get off night duty.

The punters must have been very annoyed when half of the top of the bill had withdrawn. I did not know about the Engineer's club in Hartlepool until I read Ron's write up and bills from there.

## **ballymoss**

The Lime Grove Baths Shepherds Bush which was the venue for the only promotion Norman Morrell staged in London. Fond memories of some really great contests

**paul kaye**

Living near them: Victoria Baths and Victoria Leisure Centre Nottingham, Kings Hall Derby and the Agricultural Hall Maidstone. the agricultural hall was the worst venue I have been in . It was nothing better than a cattle shed. The following were the venues for our 1992 Rock and Roll Mystery tour, following Kendo and Bob Guildhall in Plymouth  
Albert Hall in Bolton  
Town Hall in Leeds

**Bob Hayward**

My favourite venues Slough Adelphi in the sixties with Rebel Ray Hunter/Judo Al Hayes winning over all comers. Royal Pier Southampton just the walk down the pier set it all up for the night but following the Ghoul down there really made the night. loads of other venues as well but these were the two for me

**rasit huseyin**

I remember Maidstone Agricultural Hall as well, went there a few times in the late 80's/early '90's. It was actually a slaughter house, right inside Maidstone Market, and as you say, it was bloody awful! Mind you, some people have seen worse venues, my worst was the Townhouse in Enfield, it was basically a nightclub, totally unsuitable for wrestling, as I've mentioned in an earlier post. Seymour Hall, Central London anyone?

**Dennis Lord**

St James was one of the best in UK appeared in the Film get Carter Whitley Bay had two great Halls The Playhoue where I put Shows on and the old Prory Where Cyril Knowles put shows on, the best Hall on the Coast was the Plaza Tynemouth our friend Johnny Saint did his first bout there I did my first Bout there, and Sue Brittain did her first bout there great times and great memories

**JNLister**

Duncan: Bath Pavilion is still there. It's held a couple of shows in the past seven years, but is a hard venue to draw at because the council is very tough on flyposting.

**Ian**

Reading these posts makes me realise that the three venues where I used to watch professional wrestling back in the day (Fairfield Halls, Croydon; Lewisham Theatre, Catford; and Assembly Halls, Walthamstow) are all still there, although only one of them still stages wrestling shows (Croydon).

**paul kaye**

Festival Inn Trowell and De Montfort Hall Leicester

**george johnson**

According to the ASllstar Wrestling website Fairfield Halls, Croydon is closing. They are having their final promotion their in three weeks time.

**frank thomas**

If that's the case, a pity there.. Another to add to the list!

Hello George, just checked on Fairfield halls Croydon, only closing for refurb, albeit for two years. So may well spell the end for wrestling..

**rasit huseyin**

Had many a great time at the Fairfield Halls and saw many great bouts there. I certainly remember some fool switching on the radiators on a hot spring night in 1984 (the spring that year was one of the warmest ever) and almost passing out because of the heat! The last time I went there was back in 1996, at it's peak it was heaving and you had to buy your tickets in advance, otherwise you'd almost certainly miss the show, but from the early 1990's onwards I just saw it slowly get emptier and emptier, and at my last show there it wasn't even half full, which was very depressing to see indeed.

**John McCarthy**

St Matthews Baths Ipswich, 1950, s until the 1970, s. Every Friday night for the winter season. Then it went to the Pier Pavillion Felixstowe for the Summer, every Friday night. Both now closed. Good atmospheres at both venues. I met my wife at St Matthews Baths. She went out with Robby Baron for a while.

**Dennis Lord**

I think you have missed one of the best Wrestling Hall's in the area, The Plaza Tynemouth, and the Bolingbroke South Shields !!!!

**powerlock**

Your right Dennis, and I had seen shows at both, how I forgot them I don't know, talking about South Shields I believe that one of the cinemas on Ocean Road also held wrestling shows in the 1960's.

**Bernard Hughes**

Hi to all you Northerners.

Did anyone go to a show at Durham icerink?

I saw it advertised once but did not have the opportunity or finance to go.

**powerlock**

I saw it advertised once but did not have the opportunity or finance to go.

They did hold shows intermittently over the years but like you I never attended any shows there, but I did attend a couple of shows in the 1980's at Whitley Bay ice rink

**frank thomas**

Just remembered another, sports centre grange road west Birkenhead, a former army drill hall. Wrestling enterprises of Birkenhead, later all star...

**Sapper James**

I saw Status Quo at Whitley Bay ice rink.