

*TW*

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Preserving our readers' greatest memories



## Memories of The Ghoul

### **Bernard Hughes**

I have tried to recall some more memories for you. This time I have done some research using Ray Plunkett's fine records. In the late 1940's early 1950's, the most popular wrestlers at Newcastle were local boys Norman Walsh from Middlesbrough and Alf Rawlings from Stockton on Tees . However promoter Norman Morrell's top drawing card was undoubtedly The Ghoul. This immense and powerful man made more than 50 visits to St James's Hall, between his first fight on 19th June 1948,when he was billed second as opponent to the wonderful Jim Hussey and the last visit that I can find on 21st July 1956 vs. Francis St. Clair Gregory.

In the book "Headlocks and Handbags" the editor quotes 64 visits, so last night using Ray's results, I counted them. I make it 83 visits in 416 weeks, i.e. an average of 1 every 5 weeks. I told you that he was the big drawing card! I reckon that I saw at least 40 of these bouts.The first time that I saw The Ghoul,when I was nearly 13, he was sandwiched in the back seat of a carwith a wrestler either side of him. He was bigger than the 2 of them put together! When he got out of the car wearing his old white mask he was at least 2 foot taller than me.He was huge! I later saw the Mighty John Quinn, but The Ghoul in his overcoat and white mask struck me as the biggest man that I had seen.

The Ghoul was never beaten at Newcastle .My first sighting of him in the ring was January 1949 vs. Alf Rawlings. Most of his fights followed a similar pattern, the opponent got a fall in rounds 4 to 6 and The Ghoul knocked him out in rounds 7or 8. He generally won by K.O. using what was called the Guillotine Garrotte., a downward chopping motion on the opponents neck with the edge of his hand.What this had to do with the Garrotte, I don't know.

Sometimes as you can see by the results, he won by 2 falls to 1.The falls were normally pinfalls administered by choppinghis opponent and then folding him into the pin. The Ghoul was a very heavy and powerful man. I have to admit that 4 of the opponents I don't remember at all. Bill Malloy,Wally Seddon, Martin Deneef and Eric Day.Some opponents were often repeated- Gluttons for punishment. I recall some of the bouts quite well and think that you might like some details.

About 8 bouts ended in draws and it's interesting to note that local man NormanWalsh ,after he became a full blown heavyweight,got 3 of these draws and was not beaten by The Ghoul in Newcastle. Norman Walsh adopted the tactic, that when the big man's had went up to chop he would put his arm up, the chop came down on his side,not his neck, and he was able to grasp The Ghouls' arm and proceed with an armlock. Using this method he avoided defeat.

The most surprising result was Geoff Portz. When this bout was advertised, I feared for Portz. He was a very good wrestler but at the time he was only a mid heavyweight and The Ghoul was a superheavyweight. However the movement seemed to put The Ghoul off and Portz attacked at the start of each round zigzagging across the ring at speed and catching the big man still in his corner. The chops were few and far between and never seemed to land just right. Geoff Portz got a well deserved draw.

Jack Pye had 3 draws with The Ghoul, with a few losses, but the draw that I remember most was on the 12th January 1952, when Jack despite punching on the blind side, using the ropes illegally and all manner of fouls, was surprisingly not disqualified by Les Kellett and got a 10 round 1-1 draw.

When Kellett got the microphone down to speak Jack took it from him and he said "I was on top and I want one more round to show that I can beat him". The crowd was shouting Yes, Yes. The Ghoul who by this time had his dressing gown on, shook his head violently. Pye gave the mike to Kellett and said "give his this and make him say why" The crowd went wild.

Kellett made The Ghoul take the mike and The Ghoul in the worst imitated Italian accent that I have heard said "The English are supposed to be fair. I have trained hard for this bout over 10 rounds and now you want to change it to 11. No, I can't do it" and off he went to the dressing rooms. Well as you can imagine the place was in uproar. The crowd did not quieten down and let the next bout start until a man came down to the ring and Les Kellett announced that the promoter had promised a return match as soon as possible. That night for the first time in a ring Jack Pye was the most popular man there.

The return was on March 8th and Jack Pye was knocked out.

The other match that I remember well was when The Ghoul's opponent was The World's Strongest Man - Hassan Ali Bey from Egypt.

Hassan came to the ring in his red fez and black boots.

He got a submission fall in about round 4. In about round 6 The Ghoul's right hand went up to chop and the crowd shouted. Hassan just stood there. Chop! Down came the hand and Hassan smiled. He indicated to The Ghoul that it hadn't hurt and stretched his neck out for The Ghoul to hit him again. Chop! Same thing. Hassan said quite audibly "harder". Chop! The hand came down with full force and Hassan put his hands on his hips and laughed.

Disaster! The left hand came up cruelly and swiftly into Hassan's known weak point, the solar plexus. The count was a formality.

The funny thing is that although it was stated in your site that John Bates often wrestled under his own name with no mask on, I never saw his face. Even when he was coming to or leaving St. James's Hall the nearest I got was when he got into a car with just a scarf covering from his chin to his hairline. Bernard.

In Archie Potts book "Headlocks and handbags" he states that The Ghoul wrestled in all red wrestling outfit with a red mask.

Whenever I saw The Ghoul in the ring he wore a black singlet, black tights and an off white mask. This would be from about 1950 onwards. Does anyone know when Bomber Bates changed his outfit and was there a reason why he changed?

### **Anglo Italian**

Quite magnificent recollections, Bernard. I like your style of just recounting it as it was. Yes, the results listings and other info gleaned from this site help us all to remember what we witnessed. But you have the most vivid memories of the early fifties and a very big name, which makes your contribution absolutely invaluable. And as a side issue, as often occurs in your posts, my eyes are being opened very very wide at the realisation Les Kellett had a quite different role way back then. Don't worry about the colour of The Ghoul's outfit, I am absolutely sure that your memory is perfectly accurate. Many thanks for taking time to compose that enthralling post.

### **palais fan**

Great stuff Bernard!

My earliest memories of wrestling include watching The Ghoul doing his stuff at the Wimbledon Palais. As a very young boy in those days, he literally gave me nightmares! And you're right, he really was huge. As he walked to the ring he was the one wrestler everyone backed away from, even those south London 'would be' tough guys in the crowd, who tried to confront other vilians of the ring.

Do you recall that he used to revive his stricken opponents, at the bequest of the referee or MC, by administering a 'chop' that reversed the affects of his knockout blow, or did he save this for us soft southerners?

### **Bernard Hughes**

Thank you Anglo Italian and palais fan for your kind remarks.

The query about The Ghoul changing his outfit, was because I wondered if there was a reason, like the red clashing with another masked man at the time. Of course it could be that the gear got old and worn and he just used a black singlet and tights. I did hear about this chopping on the other side of the neck by The Ghoul but this was at Newcastle before 1950. I guess the crowd just didn't go for it anymore. And please note I didn't say anything about soft southerners.

Talking about the referee asking a wrestler to revive his opponent, I do vaguely remember a "Prince Banu who jumped up onto his opponents' shoulders, brought them down and then spent a round boring his knuckles into the opponents' temple, before rendering him unconscious. Les Kellett's acting that night, calling for a doctor, finding out that this Prince could revive them himself and then giving him a rollicking was almost an Oscar performance. Does anyone else remember this wrestler. From what I remember, he was either a lightweight or welterweight and he was billed from some far away land.

### **Hack**

Add my congratulations to the rest Bernard, a great piece enjoyed by many I'm sure. Fantastic memories. Sadly I didn't see the original Ghoul, too young you know! But the man I saw, Bill Coverdale I've been told, was also a big many and continued wearing of the white mask - I don't recall the much talked about Guillotine Garrote. Prince Banu was a New Zealand wrestler called Bob Russell. There was also a Prince Barnu on the independent shows of the 1960s.

## **John Shelvey**

Fascinating stuff Bernard! Many thanks.

## **james morton**

I think the independent Prince Barnu (from Brazil) was Fred Barnes a scrap dealer who trained wrestlers at St Peter's School gym in Coventry in the 1960s. He also wrote a column on wrestling for the Coventry Standard.

## **Dave Sutherland**

Maintaining the North East connection I wonder whether Bernard saw The Ghoul at the Regent Cinema in South Shields when he appeared there in 1960? This was the first of three wrestling presentations that the Regent hosted and I think he was matched against one Sean O'Shea. I was too young to go to such places on my own in those days but The Shields Gazette made a lot of it the next night and included photographs of the great man who was wearing a white mask. Talking to those who had attended the bout they did report on his winning manoeuvre and the subsequent steps that he took to remedy the damage done so it sounds like it could be the same one.

A little while later I did see Le Ghoul advertised but I can't remember where that was; possibly the foreign slant making this wrestler sound even more sinister?

## **Bernard Hughes**

Hello Dave, nice to hear from you again.

No, I didn't see The Ghoul in Newcastle in 1960 but I certainly would have done if I had still been living up there.

I went into the RAF in 1954 to do National Service until 1956 then moved to Welwyn Garden City. I'm still wondering if anyone out there saw The Ghoul wrestling in an all red outfit. That must have been very early in his career. Can anyone confirm this?

## **palais fan**

As I've said before, I remember seeing The Ghoul at the Wimbledon Palais in 1958. The records I have (largely supplied by Ray Plunkett) show him twice defeating George Bullock and also someone I've never heard of - Mike McGurk. The Ghoul wore a white mask, leotard and tights, whenever I saw him (I'm happy to doubt my memory about the white leotard and tights, but not the mask!). His favoured finishing method was the aforementioned chop and he also revived his opponents with a similar blow, at the request/demand/pleading of the MC. I also remember The Ghoul seeming to be huge, as described above by Bernard

I didn't see his run at the Palais, of around a dozen matches, in the 1954-56 period but his opponents seem to have been a fairly illustrious bunch, including Ray Appollon, Ray Hunter, Dave Armstrong, Emile Poilve; Big Bill Verna, Sandy Orford and Tony Mancelli. As far as I know The Ghoul was undefeated at the Palais and didn't unmask there.

Interestingly, Ray's records show The Ghoul beating Tony Mancelli 2-0. Mancelli was still very popular at that time, at least in south London, and was good enough to be matched against Ernie Baldwin for the British Heavyweight title during the same year in which he fought The Ghoul. Defeating a local favourite like Mancelli 2-0, suggests The Ghoul was a strong and believable adversary. Another opponent I have the Ghoul matched against, I only have a surname for - Hogarth - anyone know who he was?

## **Hack**

Thanks palais fan, your memories are always fascinating; and the 2-0 defeat of Mancelli is

quite a revelation.

Hogarth would probably be Gerry Hogarth. He seems to have been northern based and wrestled all the big names: Arthur Beaumont, Dave Armstrong, Bert Assirati, Alan Garfield, Jack Pye etc I have matches for him from 1950 until 1958 and then nothing until 1961 when he pops up in Lancaster, lo and behold, losing to The Monster, by then tag partner of The Ghoul on the independents. By the early 1960s Gerry Hogarth was promoting in the north.

### **Al Tarzo.**

"THE GHOUL" Bomber Bates, I watched him many times in the ring prior to taking to wrestling myself and the mask he wore used to make his lips massive and puffed up, for want of another description Grottesque, but I still have a vivid memory of meeting him in the dressing room when I was on the same bill, I well remember his opponent one night was Ski Hi Lee another giant and great character, who whilst he was getting geared up pulled a half bottle of "Johnny Walker" out of his kit bag and polished off around half of it before he went into the ring. Getting back to the Ghoul he was a good story teller and started recounting different ways some of them would fiddle there way on to trains, one way he said was to look around for a discarded ticket then head for the toilets, In the toilet they would hold the ticket under the tap until it was soggy, then would make their way to the entrance to the platform holding the ticket gingerly from the finger ends offering an apology to the ticket collector that it had accidently dropped into the urinal, obviously they never checked it.

### **palais fan**

Great story Al Tarzo and description of the affect the mask had on making The Ghoul's face look so scary (at least to us fans). Can you confirm the last time you saw Bomber Bates as The Ghoul?

### **Bernard Hughes**

Great story Al. I guess that our Mr. Bates did not like paying train fares because I'm sure that i read on this site about him using his old guard's outfit to get to matches free. As you will know if you have read the earlier entries on this thread, we have a discussion going on about what colour wrestling outfit The Ghoul was wearing at various times. The puffed up lips certainly sounds like The Ghoul that I saw in the 1948-54 era. . Please can you tell us what colour he was wearing when you saw him?

### **Al Tarzo.**

Hi Bernard so sorry to take so long to reply but this past month has been a busy one, with regards to the guards equipment that was a story that Bomber Bates ( The Ghoul) told the same night and he said that it was "Man Mountain Bill Benny" that used that one. The colour of his mask and outfit was a "grubby" white and I am almost certain the mask was a type of elasticated material thus making his lips puff. I am sorry I cannot give you a specific date other than early 60's, at 81 I have a good memory but it's a short one, I have tried so hard to recollect as to the location of that particular conversation being recounted but it has always stuck in my mind.

### **palais fan**

Thanks for the reply Al, I really appreciate the contributions you and the rest of the British pro wrestling fraternity make to this site.

### **james morton**

I saw the Ghoul - I don't know which- at the Palais in probably 1955 against Bernard

Vigale. Vignale took the first fall in a matter of minutes and looked as though he could have taken the second any time he wanted but.... of course... My recollection is the Ghoul was in black with a white mask and didn't look in good condition at all but maybe it was an off night.

### **Bernard Hughes**

Hi Al . Thanks for your reply. I certainly remember the grubby off white mask and protruding fat lips. Could i please ask you to rack the old memory cells and try to remember the colour of the vest and pants that The Ghoul was wearing when you saw him?

### **palais fan**

I am not sure if everyone interested in The Ghoul would have seen the photo of Assrati challenging the Gaul at the Wimbledon Palais sometime in the 1950s.



### **Anglo Italian**

Brilliant photo, many thanks. Really evokes the atmosphere.

### **Bernard Hughes**

Hi **palais fan**. I don't know how many versions of The Ghoul were active in the 1950s but that is not the wrestler that I saw. Can anyone date the photo a little more accurately? The Ghoul that i remember was much more heavily built than the one in the photo.

### **palais fan**

Hi Bernard, judging by how old Assirati looked in the photo, my best estimate of the date would be 1958, during one of The Ghoul's unbeaten runs at the Palais. It could however, have been during his 1954-56, appearances.

### **palais fan**

"With The Ghoul one of the main event wrestlers for Joint Promotions the independent promoters hit on the idea of dressing up a fellow wrestler as The Ghoul and matching him with Bert Assirati, thus allowing Assirati to enhance his reputation even further by defeating, and exposing the shortcomings, the apparently Joint Promotions star. Bill Coverdale, who Assirati had defeated days earlier, donned the white mask and entered the ring to face Assirati at The Merry Fiddlers Open-Air Venue, Becontree." Perhaps the 1958 run of The Ghoul at the Wimbledon Palais, was Bill Coverdale.

### **Bernard Hughes**

A well beaten Bill Coverdale posing as The Ghoul at the Merry Fiddlers.  
I am sure that he fought Bert Assirati more than once in this guise.

### **Hack**

You saw that Bernard?

Tell us more.

Don't say you've already told us. We want to hear it again.

frank thomas

Bernard, was that contest the same one that Joe d,Orazio relates in simon Garfields the wrestling?

### **Bernard Hughes**

First of all it was not the night described in "The Wrestling".

It must have been later in the year or the followig year, and it was not raining. Now I have to confess that I cannot be certain that it was Bill Coverdale, but as he was the normal impostor in the Southern area and because he was of a similar build, I would guess that it was. As soon as I saw the mask ,I knew that it was not the real one. Others around me were also commenting that this was not "The Ghoul". This man was shorter,weaker looking, bit of a belly and definitely not as menacing.

However a lot of what followed seemed to be following the normal script. In the first round after much running and evading by the masked man, Assirati got on a single leg boston. The mask got himself well and truly entangled in the ropes and would not let go. The referee (can't remember who he was) broke them up and dislodged the man in the mask from the ropes. Coverdale, if it was him, rolled under the bottom rope and fell heavily on the floor. Two seconds or assistants helped him to the dressing room and the announcer declared that as the masked man was injured accidentally ,he had to declare it a "No contest" This was obviously pre-planned and disappointing.The crowd were not pleased, but nothing apart from a little shouting. I watched Assirati and thought that he would say or do something to show his displeasure but nothing happened.. He had put his gown on and made his way to the dressing rooms. This was Assirati, but not the Assirati that I saw in the 1949-50 time. Then he seemed more vicious , now he seemed to accept what had just happened. Had he mellowed or just fallen in line with the promoter's wishes? An easy nights work.

If it was not Bill Coverdale under the mask, then I offer my apologies.

## **palais fan**

I've just noticed that the website [www.bertassirati.com](http://www.bertassirati.com) gives the date of the photograph of Bert Assirati challenging The Ghoul as 1956.

## **Hack**

These masked men cause us more trouble when they are unmasked than they do masked!

That's a useful find on the Assirati website Palias Fan, and gives us a photo of The Ghoul; or at least one of them. Wimbledon Palais is a troublesome venue though because it used both Joint and independent wrestlers. We had been told the Assirati challenge was 1958 but omitted it because we thought it was earlier, the reason being that we have reports of The Ghoul on the independents from 1957. Interestingly I can't see The Ghoul on Joint shows after 1957. Al Tarzo remembers Bates as the Ghoul on the independents, but we have evidence of Coverdale as an independents Ghoul. Mike Hallinan, who should know, backs this up, and some of the northern wrestlers have talked about Coverdale as the Ghoul in the 1960s. The nature of the independents of course means there could have been other Ghouls, but both Bates and Coverdale seem to have made careers of it.

## **Bernard Hughes**

From previous posts, there were obviously more versions of "The Ghoul" appearing in the 50's than I previously thought.

Apart from the one that I saw at Newcastle in the early 1950's, there are two different ones in photos on this site. The one that I thought looked like Maurice Tillet (the White Angel) and this latest one that looked a bit puny with a pot belly. It is known that Bill Coverdale was wrestling as The Ghoul at one time

Any more offers? I guess that once the name had been made by the original, all the promoters jumped on the band wagon, when the star deserted or retired. .

That leads me to my question. Did the promoters try to reserve a name of a top performer like this, or could anyone use any name as they liked? Were there ever any reprisals for deliberate "borrowing" of a star's name and reputation?

## **Ron Historyo**

Going back to the origins of the Ghoul I wonder how soon after his intro people suspected he was Bomber Bates. How long did he remain an unknown especially at Newcastle.

There could not have been many wrestlers about with his build.

The locals had seen him many times.

## **Hack**

17th August.

On this date in 1961, the death of John Joseph Bates, The Ghoul.

beancounter

Gerry Hoggarth knew Bomber Bates well. He says "The Ghoul" was a skilled sketch artist. His dressing room party piece was to invite his colleagues to draw random lines/squiggles on his sketch pad and Bomber would transform them into a still life sketch. However, Gerry had no time at all for the guillotine chop, he preferring to win with legitimate freestyle moves! Gerry is now in a rest home at Halton on Lune. I went to see him last month and am to visit again soon.

## **Bernard Hughes**

Thanks for that Beancounter.



Perhaps that is why he (?) signed my mate's sketch at Newcastle.  
I don't suppose that many people got an autograph by The Ghoul ( Bates) .  
Can anyone say they got one please?

### **Bernard Hughes**

Is there a photo anywhere that shows Bates unmasked face please?

### **Ron Historyo**

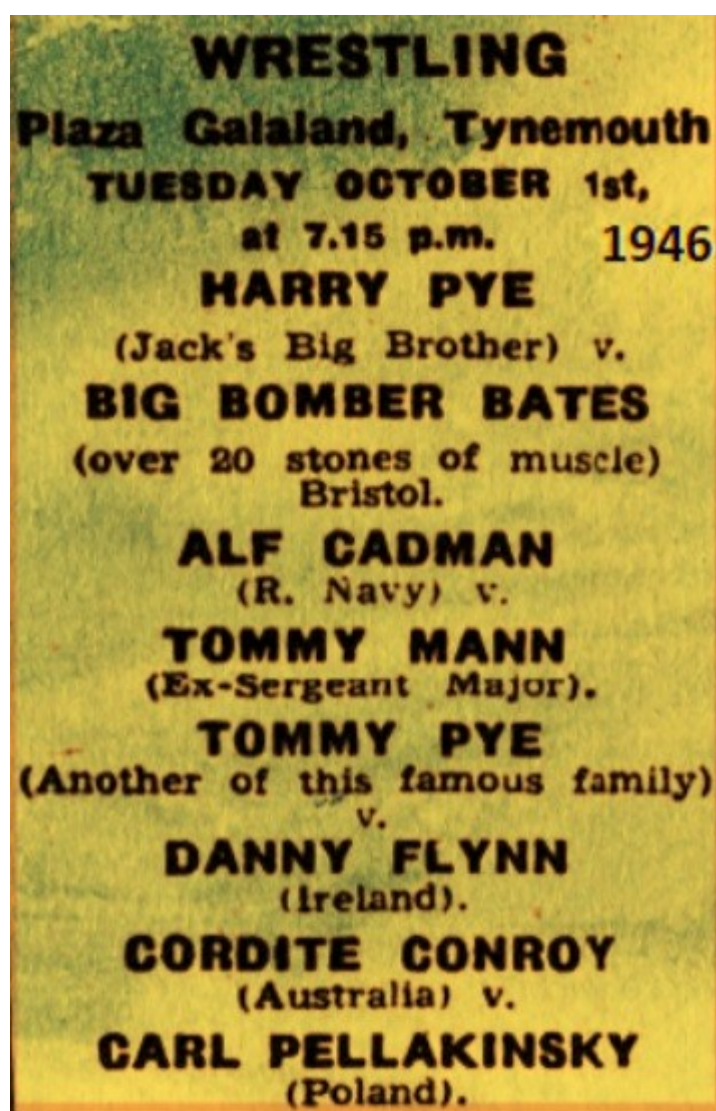
What a great question Bernard. You have got me looking now. It looks a real toughie.

### **Hack**

I don't recall a picture Bernard. It's good to know Ron is on the case.

### **Ron Historyo**

Thus far we are looking for memorabilia from 1945-1947 probably Hull , Hartlepool , Newcastle



### **james morton**

Have we actually ever seen a pic of the Ghoul let alone Bomber B ?

## Ron Historyo



### **james morton**

Thanks Ron. If it has been on before I haven't been paying attention. Who's the opponent?

### **Ron Historyo**

Masambula was the opponent James. There is another photo on Wrestlingdta.com. From what I can see when he died his age at death was reported as 44 but I think that is wrong. I reckon John J Bates was born 11th February 1914 and married Annie Rourke, lived off Princess Parkway on the Didsbury/Chorlton border before the war and was a Trainee Aircraft Fitter in 1939. His youngest children might well still be about age 70 or so. He truly has evaded his identity being revealed when it comes to his face, despite wrestling for at least three years without the mask. The reunion site has some old bills (the paste on the wall type) where there were photos of the wrestlers but I don't think 1945-1948 is a great era to spot him. Wonder if Ray Plunkett has any old stuff with him on.

### **Ron Historyo**

We now find that The Ghoul had a toughest opponent (allegedly) Not much is known of Derek Oldham and it looks like a short career, however it looks like he was born about 1931 from Manchester and he was a big lad at 21 was 21 stones. Seemed to work with Morrells boys a lot.

Bernard .....can you remember him.

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**ERIC TAYLOR** v **JIM BOYLE**  
 Admission 1/9 2/6 3/6 4/6

**Bernard Hughes**  
 I vaguely remember Oldham, a big strong boy but at that time just learning what goes on in a ring.  
 I still think that The Ghoul's misfortune to be put in hospital must have been an accident, rather than deliberate.

**Ron Historyo**  
 In 1961 a Ghoul toured Ireland for a couple of weeks. Shown is one of the bills. I understand that 1961 is thought to be too late for this to be Bomber Bates. Was Coverdale this heavy.

The reason I ask is that somewhere on this site, and I think it was in the galleries I got a message from Sean O'Shea's daughter saying how much she loved the site and finding these bills with her dad on. She told me two things. One was that Sean O'Shea was not Dad's real name and that his great Friend was Johnny Bates. Does anyone Know O'Shea's real name.

Now I can't remember who this member was or find the comments. Outside chance she might have some Photo's !!!!

So below....Bates, Coverdale or who.

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8 Round Middleweight under B.W.P.A. Rules—**JOE REID** (Ex-British Olympics representative, issues an open challenge to any Middleweight) versus **DON BOARDMAN** (Rapidly climbing the road to fame and has got an eye on Joe's title). This Bout should prove a classic.

8 Round Middleweight Contest—**PETE LINBERGH** (Austrian, Leading Contender for the Austrian Title) versus **COLIN MacDONALD** (Dundee, Scotland's white hope for Title honours.) Two of the fastest Wrestlers in the business.

Special 10 Round Heavyweight Attraction under B.W.P.A. Rules—**VINCE (Flash) EDWARDS** (the Golden Boy of the Mat, 19½ stone Britain's Leading Heavyweight Contender for the European Crown. A powerful grappler who doesn't care how he wins. Has wrestled with most of Europe's leading heavyweights and has fantastic strength and endurance) versus **SITTING BULL** (6 ft. 2 in. Mohican Indian. Wrestles bare-foot. A popular figure in British Rings. Since his appearance in British Wrestling about 12 months ago, Sitting Bull has never lost a contest. He moves with a speed and liveness that many Lightweights envy. A great favourite with the children, a lot of his time is spent in visiting sick kiddies. A delight to watch in the Ring and a true Red Blooded Sportsman.

Referee: Len Jackson of Manchester. Master of Ceremonies: Mr. Harold Watson of London. Timekeeper: Mr. A. Richards of Gloucester.

ADM.—Stage 15/-; Ringside 10/-; Centre 7/6; Standing 5/- Advance Booking at Powell's, the Four Corners, Galway, or Pay at Door on night of Show.

PLEASE NOTE—This is a North-Western Promotions Ltd., England, presentation and we have no connection with any other presentation in Eire. Wrestlers appearing are all licensed by and fight under B.W.P.A. Rules

The Promoters reserve the right to vary or omit any part of the Programme

### **Hack**

I'm pretty sure Sean O'Shea was also Jack Jefferson, though I'm not sure if that was his actual name,

### **Ron Historyo**

I have another question about the Ghoul.

If he was never beaten or unmasked , how did it come about that we found out that he was Johnny Bates and when.

In particular Bernard , when did you find out.

### **james morton**

Just a side story Ron on how identities are discovered . When Paul Lincoln in his Dr Death persona was invited to appear on a television show down in Southampton he turned up masked. On a separate show was Freddie Mills who saw him in the corridor and asked 'What are you doing where Paul?'

### **Bernard Hughes**

Hi Ron.I did not find out whilst I was watching. It was this site, item on 20 Masked Men, where I first saw it.

Amazing what you can learn here isn't it.?

By the way you personally have contributed the most to that knowledge recently.

Thank you and well done.

### **Ron Historyo**

It's been great Bernard and thanks.

So we are left with a mystery of how his ID leaked out. I suppose that it was so common knowledge in the game that some of the wrestlers have assured us of such and even today at the Blackpool reunion there were wrestlers who would know all this.

As discussed recently The Ghoul and others such as Bartelli were not nation wide names without TV so it was all a bit Parochial. Wrestling has been the ultimate deception. After 5 years of collectiing wrestling blills we are starting to prove how numerous the times were that some wrestlers met.They all had their favorites to work with. Only this week I have found Mc Manus v Logan and earlier this year Street v Barnes and many McManus v Pallo matches on lower card. Somewhere out there will be a picture of John Bates , it's on my list to find it.

### **Dave Sutherland**

Interestingly that the first of three wrestling shows at The Regent Cinema, South Shields also in 1961 featured as top of the bill The Ghoul against Sean O'Shea.

### **Tom H**

The Galway bill mentions Sean O'she beating the 19 stone Russian Ivan Zaranoff. The Ivan Josef Zaranoff I saw was nowhere near 19 stone. So I think a few porkies were told here.

A side story here. Last year I was trying to find some information on a wrestler I had seen who wasn't in the A to Z, his name was Benny Van den Burg. Sadly I found an obituary for him that had been published in a newspaper. Benny became an untrained fairground booth boxer the following is a quote from the obituary..Back in Manchester after the summer season, a doctor hinted that attrition would leave Benny punch drunk. So he won the acquaintance of the wrestler John Bates, aka The Ghoul, 6ft tall and the same around the waist, but with the speed of a striking snake and the cunning of a card sharp. From him Benny blagged a full bag of tricks and received introductions to promoters.

### **Bernard Hughes**

Isn't it funny when something totally unconnected jogs your memory of an incident? In Ron's tagteam time , a couple of the bills showed Le Ghoule appearing at shows.

I have previously recalled how a schoolmate (Jimmy Purvis) used to draw characteratures of wrestlers and get them to sign when they appeared at Newcastle.

He had drawn The Ghoul , clearly titled "La Ghoule", and we asked the big man to sign as he went up the stairs when entering the stadium.

A gruff "No" was the answer. As I had seen Mr Welch , the manager, before, we decided to leave the autograph book with him with a request to ask the big man to sign.

When the book was returned ,it was signed, "La Ghoule".

Nowadays, I wonder who did sign that book.

### **Ron Historyo**

I have my own theory Bernard and not a shred of evidence.

John Bates and Bill Coverdale were friends and that Relwyskow fancied the gimmick so Bill Coverdale played a French Ghoule as an alternative. Eventually when The Ghoul Finished , Coverdale took it over. As I say though, not a sniff of a real clue as to what was really going on. Le Ghoule seemed to occupy late 1948-1950 mainly at Hull.

### **Bernard Hughes**

Hi Ron, I think that you have a good shout there with your theory.

Early on I saw Bill Coverdale quite a few times, then he disappeared from the Newcastle scene.

He then seemed to appear more often on southern bills. Was this a change of promoter for him?

If that was the case, I presume that the southern promoter would be only too keen to bill him as The Ghoul without keeping the french tag.

### **Ron Historyo**

If that was the case, I presume that the southern promoter would be only too keen to bill him as The Ghoul without keeping the french tag.

In my favor I cannot find a bill with both Bill Coverdale and La Ghoule on.

No way would an international visitor feature mainly at just Hull.

Secrets secrets..... I bet Bert Royal would know.

### **Bernard Hughes**

Hi Ron. I was looking at the Newcastle results because I feel sure that I saw Bill Coverdale fight The Ghoul. Haven't found this yet.

What struck me and I hadn't noticed it before, was that just shortly after Sandy Orford took off his Black Angel's mask after a draw, then The Ghoul came on the scene.

Does anyone feel that there is a connection and the promoter did not want 2 masked bill toppers there at the same time?

I know that this has happened on some promotions but it struck me as odd.

Why didn't Orford lose to take his mask off?

Anyone got views on this?

### **Ron Historyo**

You saw them Bernard and as I say the bout was well practiced.

### **Ron Historyo**

I would like to know if The Ghoul had any particular type of ring entrance. Did he wear a cloak , or have any music , or come out in darkness. Was his entrance Macabre

Lets have a vivid description from the few who will remember him.

### **james morton**

I only saw The Ghoul once and I was very disappointed. It was at the Wmbleton palais probably in 1955 and my recollection is there was no music, no grand entrance. First on after the interval. I don't know who was under the mask that night but the opponent Bernard Vignale took an early fall (6 x 10, 2 falls etc) and ran rings round the Ghoul who looked hopelessly out of condition until the obligatory finish in round three I think. It seemed to me that Vignale could have had four or five falls by then. That was the night that I realised all was not always what it seemed.

### **Bernard Hughes**

Hi Ron. For once I might be in the right place. Sometimes I feel like a dinosaur on here , because the topics are beyond my range of knowledge as people will write about what they saw.(quite rightly). I always read the threads but often feel that I cannot reply because I don't know or didn't see the wrestler or method under discussion.

His entrance was little different to all of the other wrestlers, other than the fact that he was ,or seemed, bigger than most and wore a grubby off white mask, which seemed to cling close to his face and push his lips out.

In those days, there was no music, dimming of the lights or any other gimmicks that you modern fellows got up to. This was a sport(?) for men ,or so it seemed to my young eyes.

### **Ron Historyo**

Interesting to record what you say Bernard. Twenty years later and Ghoul would have had to be rebranded.

Even the Undertakers Nathaniel and Jonathan had a very good ring entrance although I thought their bouts were not quite as good as they should have been.

I am going crazy these days, every guy I meet who is over 80 , I keep asking them if they ever went to the wrestling , It always seems to be Jack Pye , Bill Benny , Bomber Bates and Assirati that they remember.

I should imagine what you witnessed Bernard , was pre television at the peak of real attendance figures and numbers of halls. Some halls even twice a week.

Very much up for debate what the real boom was.

### **Bernard Hughes**

What I witnessed Ron, was pure quality, with even the first warm up bout being hard fought and enjoyable.

### **Ron Historyo**

Bernard, that is my feeling too , Perfect Deception , must look absolutely real.

Hard men and hard times.

### **Bernard Hughes**

3 fights stood out for me in my watching live career.

The first was a 15 round, 1-1 draw between George Kidd and Johnny Stead for the World Lightweight Title. 15 rounds of brilliant scientific wrestling with holds and counters.

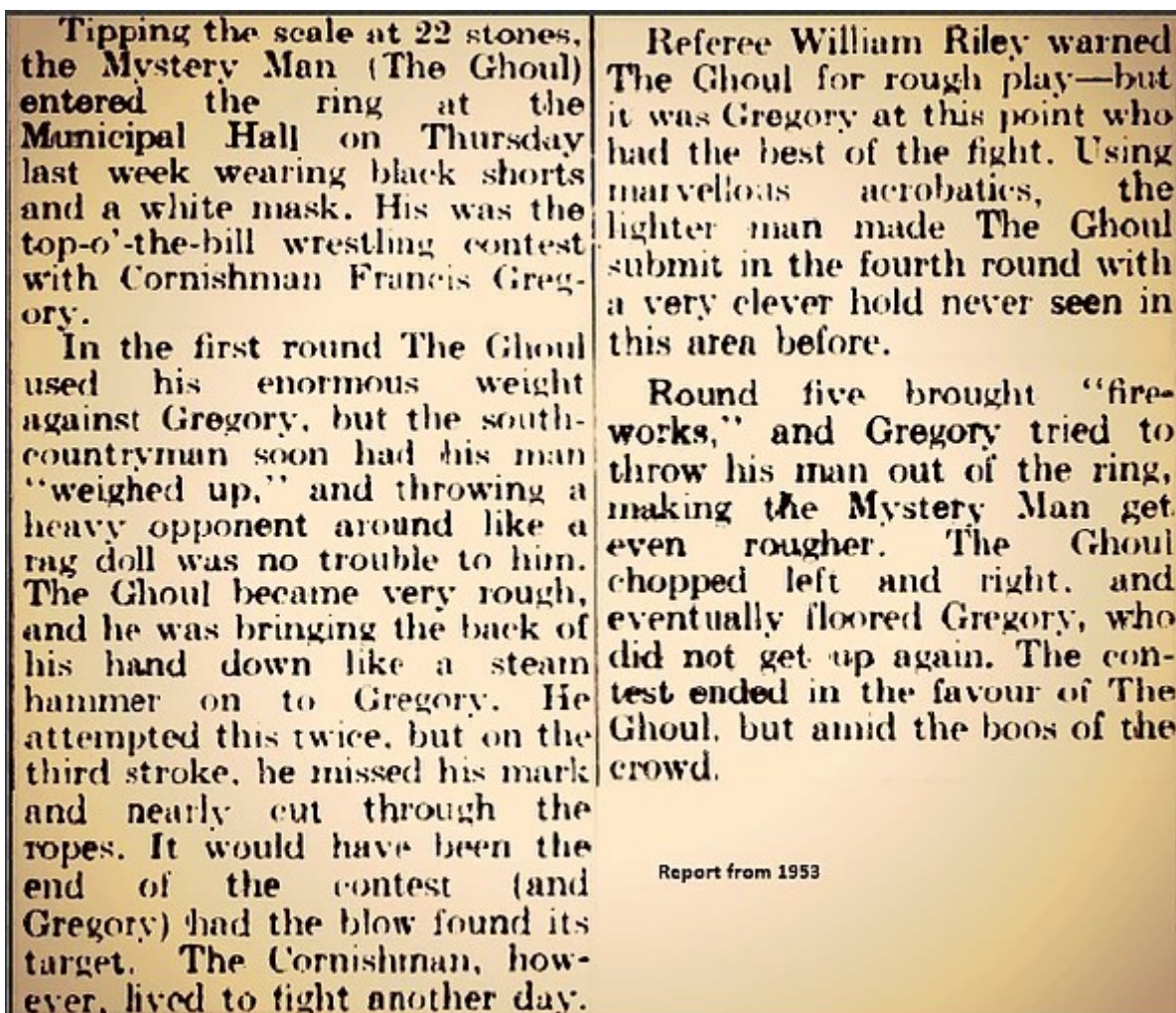
The second was also a draw, over 10 rounds, between The Ghoul and Jack Pye, which also ended in a draw this time after 10 rounds. This was the fight Where Jack told Les Kellett that he wanted one more round to beat The Ghoul, but the latter refused and went off to the dressing rooms. Jack had the place in an uproar, demanding that The Ghoul come back and fight another round and of course the audience was all for it. The hubbub

did not die down until Kellett announced that The Ghoul and Jack Pye would fight a return match "As soon as it could be arranged".

The third fight was also The Ghoul. It wasn't the fight so much ,more the result when he unmasked The Vampire, who turned out to be Bill Benny. The only time that I saw a wrestler unmasked in the ring live. I had missed the Sandy Orford unmasking by about 2 years and the regulars often talked about that.

### Ron Historyo

Enjoy this report



### Bernard Hughes

Thanks for that Ron.

Colourful language! "bringing his hand down like a steam hammer" and "nearly cut through the ropes".

But after all that the same type of result. Opponent gets a fall in round 4-6 and then is knocked out a round or two later. Now where have I heard that before.

Interesting to note, no mention of this often quoted idea of The Ghoul bringing his opponent around by chopping him again. Never saw that myself in about 40 of his fights.