



Wrestlers That Didn't Drive

Les Prest

I find it amazing that the number of wrestlers in the Teesside area during the 50's and early 60's that couldn't drive, 3 of which were Gentleman Jim Stockdale, Big Bill Stones and Dirty Dicky Swales. The latter being Dicky who travelled the length and breadth of the country by train mainly, then either taxi or promoter would pick him up from the station and take him to the venue, Dicky told me not long ago that a typical week that he could remember was, starting in Hull on the Tuesday night then Loughborough wed, Bristol thurs, Belfast Fri and Workington on Saturday, so that was several trains and taxis and 2 ferries, what would that lot cost today?. I can recall when I was wrestling in the 70's we were paid 4 pound per hundred miles (you could get 3 gallons of petrol for a quid). Cyril Knowels always would say ' how much is the ESSO for your expenses ' ? I suppose that in the 50's wrestling was very popular, with packed houses every night, so money was no object to pay for train fares and hotels. regards Les.

The Ost

Really interesting topic.

frank thomas

Recall reading that Keith Martinelli, old "bloodboots" never drove. Whether he couldn't or just didnt, I don't know..

PETER

Not unheard of even today for wrestlers to travel to venues by train

Bernard Hughes

Hi Les. Many of the London boys coming to Newcastle came up by train.

I know because I walked with them to show them the way to the Central station, going back down.

Long old trip though wasn't it?

Les Prest

Hi Bernard: what percentage of a wrestlers wages , would the price of a rail ticket be in those days? from London to Newcastle now will cost about 120 quid return. Maybe if you book online now you may get cheap deals, but that wouldn't be the case in the 50s. regards Les.

Yes Bernard: it was a long trip, I suppose if you had to drive from London to Newcastle, wrestle them drive back again, would be quite gruelling. Which I know quite well, from my own experience from doing long distance wrestling shows. regards Les.

Bernard Hughes

Hi Les, I couldn't tell you because I never bought a rail ticket Newcastle to London when I was 10-14.

I don't suppose that wages in those days would have been more than about £5 per week. That's if you were known and trusted , so you kept pretty busy.

Melvin M Melvin

One of the books (either Pallo or Garfield) speaks of a wrestler nicknamed Banger by his peers (not Walsh) who avoided the train fare by buying clapped out cars then ditching them - it ran out cheaper.

As a non-driver by choice, I am sometimes surprised by the number of people in the public eye who don't drive -- darts player Eric Bristow didn't, for example. It's less surprising for those who are London-based, because available transport is generally excellent.

Hack

There's often been comments about Robby Baron and Bob Kirkwood driving McManus. Did McManus drive at all?

Mad Mac

I have one of my vague recollections that he stopped driving after being in an accident.

ballymoss

I believe Mick McManus was a driver, but owing to his exalted position with Dale Martin, he often had someone to drive him. He was involved in a traffic incident as a passenger in a car driven by Eddie Capelli .Back in the 1960's this revelation made news in the tabloid press, and caused quite a few people to scratch their heads!!

Bernard Hughes

I think that I read somewhere ,quite a while ago, that Dale Martin's had a small bus that Mick used to drive the wrestlers to venues in.

powerlock

The Crabtrees did the same

Mad Mac

There was some mention of Max, frugal as ever, sticking to 50 MPH to save on petrol!

In the 80s, Jim Duggan and The Iron Sheik were arrested while travelling in the same vehicle. At the same time, they were at war on US television!

David Mantell

The business in Britain was less concerned with maintaining kayfabe with regard to heel vs blue-eye/babyface enmity.

It was publicly acknowledged that the goodies and the baddies all dressed together and were expected to get along like sensible adults backstage (although, of course, often they didn't even in real life, never mind in kayfabe!)

Big Daddy and Tony StClair were famously pictured around the turn of the 70s/80s congratulating Jim Breaks on a major trophy win, whereas, say, the WWF circa 1991 would NEVER have published a photo of Hulk Hogan and the Ultimate Warrior at the WM7 afterparty congratulating the Nasty Boys on having won the WWF World Tag Team Title.

And then there was that episode of This Is Your Life where hated enemies Giant Haystacks and Kendo Nagasaki could unite to help another, mutual hated enemy, Big Daddy, celebrate his life. The likes of Bill Watts would have been mortified - surely Stax and Naggars would only ever agree to participate in such a show if it was retitled This Is Your Death and they could brutally maim Daddy to kingdom come?

(Having said all the above, there's actually an episode of the old cartoon Hulk Hogan's Rock N Wrestling where Hogan and the Iron Sheik end up having to cooperate after being stranded on a desert island together. If not for the drugs and alcohol, the WWF could have looked to the plot of that cartoon for a good way to explain the Duggan/Sheik situation to their fans.)

beancounter

Gerry Hoggarth tells me it was quite easy to travel around the country by train in the 1950s as almost every town had a station. However, it led to arriving home at unsocial hours. The promoters gave around 3 weeks notice of venue and reimbursed the fares. Sometimes arrangements were made for him to be picked up in Lancaster if a group from, say, Wigan were travelling North. Surprisingly, Gerry maintains he never knew the identity of his opponent until he read the poster on arrival. Was this the case with you Les?

Les Prest

Hi beancounter: good question, I would say 60% of the time I wouldn't have a clue who I would be on against until I saw the bill outside the hall and even then things could have changed. During the the summer months in the mid 70's, I worked in a garage for a haulage company on the back shift till 2100 hrs, which was 45 minutes from Scarborough spa, so if any wrestler hadn't turned up by the first bout had finished Toma Hanson who run the wrestling for Don Robinson would phone me to get myself through there a,s,a,p as he would always tell me to have my wrestling gear in my car when working back shift..But If I ever asked him who I would be on against, he would just say get your self through here, I'll decide when you get here. Sometimes the M.C. would stall the show while I got my boots on and still not knowing who I would be wrestling, it could have been someone that I didn't know or even Toma himself. Wrestling at Scarborough during the summer was on every Monday and Thursday evenings, and local punters thought that I was a resident of Scarborough. Hope this answers your question Beancounter !!! Regards Les

Bernard Hughes

Hi all, Norman Walsh back in the 50's never knew either.

At first I used to tell him, but he said that it made no difference.

I'm sure that in those days anyway and probably still today, wrestlers did not know.

So much for special training for a title bout ! How often did I hear that and believe it !

Les Prest

Hi Bernard: I don't know whether you knew of Mack & Larries cafe in Stokesley! but Norman Walsh was a good friend of the Gainsburrell brothers, and when he was wrestling at Farrar street in Mbro he would call in for his tea on his way from knayton, and would ask who he was wrestling on the night and if it was Bob McDonald he would say If better not have much tea this evening because it will be a tough fight. I'm only going on this statement by what one of the Gainsburrells once told me.

Philip Kenyon

I was the same as Les i.e. about 60% of the time I never knew my opponent until we met in the dressing room.

One very funny (or not so funny) thing happened once when I was told by Bob Bannister (Trainer/Manager) that I was on the bill in Kirkland Memorial Hall nr. Morecambe. When I got there, I was told by Hal Strickland who I think was the promoter, "There must be a mistake you are down as a referee for this evening"!

I had never refereed in my life and to be honest it was a nightmare.

Bernard Hughes

Hi Les. No sorry, never heard of them.

I had lost touch with Norman before he moved to Knayton.

Do you know roughly when that was?

Les Prest

My sentiments exactly, in the early 80s myself and Sean NcNeil bought a wrestling ring off Don Robinson and did a bit of promoting, and just to keep costs down I referred quite a bit, and I hated it the worst job of the show, but some ex wrestlers appeared to enjoy reffing but not me. ?? Also Bernard I think Norman Walsh took the Dog & Gun pub on in knayton about 1958 or thereabouts, but I'll find out exactly for you. Best regards to you both. Les.

Philip Kenyon

Not only hating the job, another fact was I didn't have any referee's gear with me i.e. T-Shirt and or white shirt, black or white trousers etc.

Because we (had a friend with me) were going to Morecambe after the show, to see a couple of Women who were running a pub there, we were dressed "to kill", so there I was with a blue shirt and trouser from my best suit. The only thing that looked genuine on me were my wrestling boots!

Les Prest

Well Phil: it looked like you were thrown into the deep end well and truly, there's no wonder you were put off reffing after that experience. I think reffing is like marmite you either love it or hate it, as it happens I like marmite but not reffing. Regards Les.