

4th January 2006

JANUARY 4TH

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

The year 2006 is the Centenary Year for the Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling Association, for in July 1906 a conference of delegates from associations and committees interested in the Cumberland and Westmorland style of wrestling was held in the Great Central Hotel in Carlisle. They were met in the interests of honest wrestling. The Committee at Carlisle had done their best to make the ring clear, but they had not succeeded yet.

The detailed report of the meeting in the Carlisle Journal went on to give an account of the corrupt nature of the sport. When old wrestlers got to the far end of a competition they had doubts whether the money was being wrestled for or given away. This was not sport; it gave disappointment to the spectators and brought ridicule on wrestling generally.

The Carlisle Committee had gone once or twice into their own ring and expelled competitors, but they found that these competitors wrestled in other rings and didn't suffer in any great degree from expulsion. Wrestling had been brought to a state of great popularity by the Carlisle Committee. They had over 360 entries at their last sports and they ran an Academy during the winter at which they had over 100 wrestlers each week. If therefore they could take a strong stand and were able through the operations of a Central Board to take such extreme measures as barneying called for, a further great step would have been taken in popularising the game.

Most people attending came from the Carlisle and West Cumbria, but there were messages of support from Keswick and Morpeth in Northumberland. But there is a hint of bad blood between regions: Some years ago there was a feeling that Westmorland was not treated fairly by the old Carlisle Committee, and crucially, no-one from the Grasmere Committee attended. Without comprehensive support from all wrestling regions the task of the new Governing Board would be compromised.

In 1907 the authority of the Association was challenged in the strongest possible way when Grasmere Sports refused to affiliate, and the Association responded by threatening to ban from its events any wrestler who participated at Grasmere. Entries for Grasmere seemed unaffected by the threat as 190 wrestlers took part, including the main stars of the game.

Ironically, four of the last six competitors standing in the heavyweights were suspended for barneying and the final was never wrestled, so the reason for the new Association was well illustrated by the first major challenge to its authority.

The second test of the Association's authority came with the Ullswater Sports, a major event which followed shortly after Grasmere. The pessimists thought that the Ullswater Sports would be a disaster with all the best wrestlers banned, but the opposite happened. The Ullswater Committee announced they would refuse entries from all the men who took part in the wrestling at Grasmere, and immediately there came such a rush of entries from all parts of the two counties as had never been previously experienced. The fact that the programme contained the names of 302 wrestlers was of itself sufficient proof that the new era in local wrestling was one which met with popular favour.

Another change introduced that day was to draw afresh each new round instead of following the same order established by the programme. By this means the planning ahead of who should win which bouts was stopped.

Barneying was not rooted out completely by the formation of the Wrestling Association, but as the Carlisle Journal of the day said: There is reason to hope that the Association's firm determination to suppress malpractices will be attended with success.. a great step will be taken towards ridding the sport of its abuses which have seriously discredited it, and restoring it to its proper position among healthy north-country pastimes.

A hundred years later The Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling Association is still on duty.

12th January 2006

JANUARY 12TH

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

The first serious wrestling bouts of 2006 sent out a clear message: Richard Dixon could be the man to watch in this New Year. On the mats at Currock House, he lost only one fall in four sections of the club Points Night.

Last year's Grass Season was a good one for him with a double championship success in the boys and notable wins in the men's wrestling. 2006 could be even better as his strength catches up with his height. His sharp reactions and wide range of chips were clearly evident on the mats as he hanked and buttocked and hiped.

The solitary fall that he conceded was something special, too, when Andrew Carlile took him up and away on a swinging hipe.

A small battered cup that may once have looked silvery is one of the most precious and hard earned trophies in wrestling these days, for it rewards the best performance of the night in the junior wrestling. Helen Housby was a contender with her stylish win amongst the boys in the Under 12 Years, but there was no real doubt about the winner, for Adam Ridley of Slaggyford won both his own weight category, the 8½ stones, in a final with Michael Harrington, then went on to fell Jack Ewart of Westward in the Under 15 Years.

Not content with that, he then reached the final of the 10 stones only to go down to the crips counters and attacks of Josh Desborough of Carlisle.

For the young wrestlers at Milnthorpe Academy their indoor training and competitions have taken on a new sense of purpose as four of them have their air tickets booked to compete in Brittany in March.

One of the biggest events of Cumberland and Westmorland wrestling actually takes place each year in the Breton town of Carhaix. Around 150 wrestlers compete in the Breton Backhold Championships which are divided into numerous age and weight groups for both male and female wrestlers. The event is for individuals rather than teams but wrestlers from several other countries are invited.

The Milnthorpe wrestlers who will be competing on March 19th are young and light: Stuart Mason (12yrs, 56kg), Douglas Parsons (13yrs, 56kg), Tom Mason (15yrs, 60kg) and Sam Wilkinson (15yrs, 66kg), but each will have the opportunity to compete against appropriate opposition.

Any other wrestlers wishing to participate should phone me (01697473559) in the next week.

Carlisle wrestlers attended the funeral of Russell Morton who died at Wetheral recently. Russell had trained at Carlisle Wrestling Club over the past months.

Results: Carlisle Wrestling Club Points Night

6st 1, J Brown; 2, H Housby; 3, D Parker; 4, L Parker.

7st 1, P Murray; 2, J Brown; 3, H Housby; 4, K Brown.

8½st 1, A Ridley; 2, M Harrington; 3, C Ridley; 4, J Brown.

10st 1, J Desborough; 2, A Ridley; 3, P Murray; 4, C Ridley.

Under 12 Years 1, H Housby; 2, J Brown; 3, J Thompson; 4, D Parker.

Under 15 Years 1, A Ridley; 2, J Ewart; 3, D Ewart; 4, C Ridley.

Under 18 Years 1, R Dixon; 2, P Housby; 3, D Thompson; 4, C Ridley.

Girls 1, D Thompson; 2, K Brown; 3, H Housby.

11½st 1, A Carlile; 2, R Dixon; 3, J Desborough.

13st 1, R Dixon; 2, A Carlile; 3, Joe Harrington; 4, J Desborough.

All Weights 1, R Dixon; 2, Joe Harrington; 3, A Carlile; 4, J Desborough.

25th January 2006

REQUESTS AND COMMENTS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

Requests and comments from around the globe as Roger gives us a glimpse inside his postbag this week.

Connections: last week I had wrestling enquiries by e-mail from Greystoke and Salt Lake City, a letter from a reader in Cheshire, and two personal glimpses into wrestling's past.

At the end of a talk I gave on the history of wrestling at The Langdale Hotel, John Benson sr., who farmed locally, talked quietly about wrestling bouts he had seen before I was born; how, at local wrestling events, competitors would literally throw their hats into the ring to see who would wrestle whom; how a local man had always been able to fell the great Professor Jack Robinson before the latter went off to teach unarmed combat to the South African police, and how the Langdale Valley was full of wrestlers who learned the skills without leaving the valley, without the help of academies and formal coaching.

Contrast that with an e-mail enquiry from Robert Gallimore, Clan Morrison Society, Salt Lake City, Utah: I am trying to locate video footage of Cumberland/ Westmoreland wrestling. The purpose is to provide some examples to use in some clinics we would like to hold promoting what in the USA is referred to as Highland wrestling. The global village has taken over from grass roots culture.

Even on a more local basis, John Benson's grandson, Graham, who showed up so well in the boys' wrestling last year, now travels regularly to train at Kendal Academy, under the tutelage of Joseph Robson (who, by the by, holds the 14th Championship belt, which was presented by Professor Jack Robinson of Johannesburg in 1951). And by way of this web site came the following enquiry: Is there a local club near Penrith. I live in Greystoke? Good wrestling mats, good coaches and a good car are now the key to wrestling's future.

My talk at the Langdale Hotel threw up another glimpse into the past when a member of the audience asked whether I knew Mervyn Sewell. Mervyn Sewell: who lives two miles from here, wrestling mentor of Tom Harrington, wrote for the papers after the War, organised Carlisle Academy in its post-War hey-day, fellow auditor and Governing Board Member, colleague at Trinity School? Yes, I said, I know Mervyn.

Jack Bromily, from Formby, Lancs, had been a fellow student in Manchester in 1944, and recalled being used as a sort of wrestling punch-ball for training purposes by Mervyn, who would throw him around despite a big weight disadvantage. The system must have worked for Mervyn Sewell was the 9½ st Grasmere Champion in 1946 when the sports resumed after five-year gap for the War.

A reader in Cheshire went even further back. In response to a previous article about collecting archive material on wrestling John Little of Oxton on The Wirral wrote that My grandfather, John Little was a well known champion 11st wrestler in the period 1886-1896. My brothers and I still have his cups and belts including a rather splendid cup presented at Morpeth Olympic Games and some photographs of him in wrestling garb Also enclosed was a contemporary newspaper article giving all the successes in huge detail of Jack Little of the Crown and Anchor Inn, Scotch Street, A Hero of the Past.

Old trophy collections often end up split up and lost, so it was good to hear of a treasured family collection. For my part I was able to refer the enquirer to photographs of his grandfather in Machell's book of Grasmere Sports where J Little stands alongside the likes of George Steadman and Hexham Clark in the traditional group photograph that always concluded the wrestling programme.

2nd February 2006

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM AROUND THE NORTH

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

News and views from around the North as Roger gives us his unique insight of Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling.

Last night I discovered that the internet is like my desk: desperately cluttered and needing a spring-clean. News of a new Grasmere Sports web site, and the offer of a shared berth there for the Wrestling Association inspired me to see what was presently available if you type in the words Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling and search the web. And then I waded through the top two hundred sites.

The results were dispiriting. Top of the pile was an academic article by Dr Mike Huggins of St Martin's College Ambleside The Regular Re-invention of Sporting Tradition and Identity: C&W Wrestling. I have read and enjoyed this piece before, but it was not to be seen last night for the page was unable to be displayed.

By some system that I know nothing of the same article was supposedly available on a huge range of search engine sites, but none would display it. Almost half the sites on our wrestling were thus rendered barren.

Dominant on the first page of results were four different references which led to the Power Books web site promising details of wrestling and a calendar of events.

The only problem is that it fell defunct in 2000. A Londoner, Donald Black, who stayed with me one week-end in 1999 set it up, full of excellent photos and detail, but that initiative died six years ago.

In the top ten hits only the sites run by The Cumberland News and Radio Cumbria had any up-to-date references to wrestling.

Scattered throughout the web are interesting snippets, though many of them out of date: Cross-Buttock Ale from Jennings, my obituary for Bob Clarke in the Westmorland Gazette; the Scottish Wrestling Bond site(last up-dated 2003)..

Amongst all the internet dross were some gems: The Lakeland Country Fair, Torver site is an example to all, up to date and lively with wrestling weights and times for this years event. The Cumberland County Council site had interesting old photos.

And at 199 was a gem: Annabelle Smith's site displaying a sample of wrestling and rugby figurines and sketches.

For up to the minute information on wrestling the best sites were those of Radio Cumbria and The Hexham Courant, a sister publication of the Cumberland News.

On the Courant site every wrestling article published in the Cumberland News is there in full with photos and dates.

The lesson to be learned from all this is that if the Wrestling Association does establish a web-site, either in conjunction with Grasmere Sports or independently then it has to be regularly maintained or it just becomes more internet litter.

The offer is from Roy Lomas, the author of the wonderful book on Grasmere Sports - The first 150 Years, is the man behind the initiative, so the prospect of a good dynamic web-site full of good photos and information is a realistic prospect.

9th February 2006

RESULTS AND COMMENT FROM THE THIRD MEN'S POINTS NIGHT OF THE WINTER SEASON

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

The wrestling mats at Currock House were tested to the limits by a series of spectacular bouts during the third men's Points Night of the winter season.

Andrew Carlile of Carlisle set the standard when he flung Richard Dixon of Lessonhall up and away on a swinging hipe. And that level of intensity flowed right through the three weights until Richard Fox felled John Harrington in the last bout of the night to clinch the All Weights section after a wrestle off. Throughout the night it was a case of Anything you can do, I can do better. Richard Fox buttocked; Joe Harrington inside hiped; John Harrington outside hiped; and

Richard Dixon legged up for some great falls but their wrestling was better than that simplistic view for they wrestled with subtlety and deft reaction.

Tom Harrington reckoned, and he should know, that these young men could have held their own in any age.

The lightweights ended in a three way tie so more wrestling was required to sort out the places. In the All Weights, too, there were extra bouts. Only John Harrington in the middleweights went right through the round robin without dropping a fall.

Yet, despite the feast of good wrestling in the men's classes, perhaps the best fall and the biggest applause of the night was when a tiny lad, Daniel Parker of nearby Currock played a perfect inside click against a bigger lad to win the wrestle-off for fourth place in the 8½ stons. The club coach, Alan Jones, was beaming for guess what he had been teaching young Daniel last week.

Despite his heroics, Daniel Parker, was not the wrestler to win the trophy for the best performance of the night. That honour went to Paul Murray of Arlecdon who won his own weight at 7 stons with power and control, and then surpassed himself in the final of the 8½ stons when he took the Under 15/8st Champion Adam Ridley to four falls before going down.

Carlisle Wrestling Club Points Winners

6st 1, J Brown; 2, J Walton; 3, D Parker; 4, L Parker.

7st 1, P Murray; 2, J Brown; 3, L Parker; 4, J Walton.

8½st 1, A Ridley; 2, P Murray; 3, C Ridley; 4, D, Parker.

10st 1, W Noimai; 2, C Ridley; 3, J Desborough; 4, D Ewart.

Girls 1, D Thompson; 2, K Brown; 3, H Kennedy.

Under 12 Years 1, J Brown; 2, H Kennedy; 3, J Walton; 4, R Graham.

Under 15 Years 1, A Ridley; 2, C Ridley; 3, M Harrington; 4, D Ewart.

Under 18 Years 1, Joe Harrington; 2, A Ridley; 3, J Thompson; 4, J Desborough.

Best Performance Trophy, Junior Wrestling: Paul Murray

Men's 11½st 1, A Carlile; 2, R Dixon; 3, John Harrington; 4, J Desborough.

13st 1, John Harrington; 2, R Fox; 3, A Carlile; 4, Joe Harrington.

All Weights 1, R Fox; 2, John Harrington; 3, R Dixon; 4, Joe Harrington

23rd February 2006

CHAMPIONSHIP CANCELLATION DETAILS AND DETAILS OF OTHER EUROPEAN MEETINGS ...

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

Can an organisation be too successful for its own good?

This thought is prompted by the announcement that the International Federation of Celtic Wrestling (IFCW) has cancelled the European Youth Wrestling Championships which were supposed to take place during Easter.

Originally the championship was to take place in Leeuwarden in the Friesian area of the Netherlands, but Herman Split, the organiser, was working more or less on his own, and had to withdraw the offer. No country has taken up the option, so with Easter only weeks away cancellation was inevitable.

Our wrestlers were part of the initial formation of the IFCW in 1985, and we have played an active part every year since then. The first championships, held in Lorient, Brittany, had only four participating countries: Brittany, England, Iceland and Scotland. Each of these countries took its turn as host of the annual event, and new countries, Holland, The Canary Islands, and Sweden joined in. By 1991 the expense of staging the event became such that the European Championships became biennial.

Ireland, Sardinia, Leon in Northern Spain, and Austria have since joined forces, so potentially eleven nations take part.

Hospitality was cheap and cheerful at first, but standards of accommodation rose year by year. When Carlisle hosted the event in 1989, the wrestlers stayed at a Youth Hostel. Ten years later the wrestlers all had modern individual rooms and the total cost was in excess of £12,000.

For the Spaniards this was no problem, for in 1997 their regional government had given £20,000 in a single grant to stage the Championships. The Bretons, too, could cope, for they have a much bigger organisation with full time officials, and there is a tradition of Town Festivals which could be tapped into for a venue and the all-important hospitality.

Last year the Scots were supposed to be staging the European Championships, but could not find funding, so at short notice, the town of Landerneau in Brittany took on the task admirably. The reality of the situation is that ten countries are happy to take part, but only two or three have the capacity to stage the event. As a smaller participant we have sought not take our fair share, but the 1999 Championships was a major and time-consuming task. Not for us an easy single grant to cover all expenses; we had more than sixty sponsors.

The Espoirs (Youth) Championships has followed a similar pattern. Introduced as a low-key, cheaper event alternating every two years with the senior championships, it now has grown into a major prestigious event with bigger teams, and attached to it also are the European Women's Championship, so the lesser wrestling organisations are unable to cope with the cost.

Two of our best young coaches are keen for the Espoirs Championships to take place this year. David Atkinson and Andrew Carlile have both reached the highest honours in the international scene and want to pass on their experience and skills, particularly in the Breton style. At present we have a vintage crop of young wrestlers between the ages of 16 and 21, who would do well in any wrestling company, so there is an extra incentive to take part.

The Easter cancellation does not mean that all hope is lost for this year. The way is now open for any country to stage the event at a time of its own choosing, and The President of the IFCW, Jean Francois Hubert, has indicated that a move back to a cheaper more Spartan regime might be the answer.

On March 19th Carhaix in Brittany hosts the Breton Backhold Wrestling Championships. Officials from various countries will be present so perhaps some compromise arrangement may allow this year's Espoirs Championships to take place and our youngster to shine on an international stage.

(Roger Robson is Author of the book 'Cumberland & Westmorland Wrestling' published by Bookcase 1999)

3rd March 2006

THE GOOD OLD DAYS IN WEST CUMBRIA

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

The good old days in West Cumbria reviewed by Roger Robson this week in his personal view of the sport.

In some areas Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling relies on one or two individuals to keep the sport alive.

The West Coast of Cumbria used to be a hot-bed of wrestling with the miners and shepherds fuelling the sport in the Nineteenth Century, and with a big following right up to the post-War boom in the fifties when academies at Bootle and

Gosforth kept a good supply of skilful wrestlers. But now only Waberthwaite Academy, near Bootle, gives a chance for young people to hipe and hank.

Tom Porter, the man behind Waberthwaite's healthy continuation, was part of that original swell of interest. He was not one of the stars of the wrestling scene, but his impact over the years has been second to none in West Cumbria.

This week his club hosted the Young Farmers from Drigg who were no doubt finding out where the wrestling talent was for the North Cumbria Field Day in May. He takes his wrestling to Junior Schools and has links with a local Youth Club.

The academy is run in its own idiosyncratic way. For a start it is free for all participants, relying on Tom finding funding for expenses from Sellafield, the local Neighbourhood Forum and the Domino League Charity. On a visit this week, I was fascinated to see a competition run in the old traditional way that I had only ever heard about.

Once upon a time those wanting to wrestle would literally throw their cap into the ring. Those that fell nearest to each other were paired for the first round of wrestling. At the end of that round the winners threw their hats in again for the second round pairings. Caps are in short supply these days, but everybody has to wear footwear, so an armful of trainers were thrown onto the mat before each round.

This system which, a rare thing these days, cuts out all paperwork entirely is something new/old to add to the Wrestling Handbook which is in preparation for the CWWA at present.

Tom Porter has soldiered on alone for a number of years, but this year has seen a sharing of the load with parents of wrestlers taking a more active role, and particularly the return of Joe Lowery to the wrestling mats.

Joe used to be a highly successful wrestler in the boys and was just making his mark amongst the men, when he was knocked back by injury and farming responsibilities.

At last year's Academy Shield Competition he was the mainstay of the Waberthwaite team, both as coach and wrestler. That interest has continued and week by week he has been bringing on a good group of young wrestlers.

Tom Porter can say how the trips should be done, but is no longer able to get a hold to show the way, so he is delighted with Joe's contribution as a coach and active wrestler.

Anyone wishing to sample the special qualities of Waberthwaite Academy should go along at 7.30pm on Tuesdays to Waberthwaite Village Hall, or join them for their Open Night on Saturday 18th March when wrestlers are invited from all areas for a wide range of competitions.

(Roger Robson is Author of the book 'Cumberland & Westmorland Wrestling' published by Bookcase 1999)

23rd March 2006

BRITTANY BACKHOLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

Young wrestlers were in action, home and away, last week-end. Carlisle Academy wrestlers, several from Northumberland, travelled the long and winding road to the Open Night at Waberthwaite Academy in West Cumbria, but their journey was as nothing compared to that of a group from Minthorpe Academy which flew to the Brittany Backhold Championships in the town of Carhaix.

Over a hundred wrestlers competed in Cumberland and Westmorland Style Wrestling in the Salle Omnisport in Carhaix, and Sam Wilkinson and Tom Mason of Milnthorpe found themselves in one of the biggest and most competitive groups, the 66kg Under 16 Years. Wrestling in round robins in two separate pools, best-of-five falls, Mason had all sorts of trouble while Wilkinson went through to the cross-tie semi-finals without losing a fall. By error Mason was also put forward and showed his subtle wrestling skills in felling Wilkinson before the fault was rectified. Duly reinstated, Wilkinson then won the re-wrestled semi and the final with his careful style. He mainly went for hold and then rushed his man forward off his hip.

The two other Milnthorpe boys both acquitted themselves well, with Stuart Mason winning the +52kg Under 13 Years, and Douglas Parsons coming second to Colas Caritte, one of the best wrestlers on display. Parsons had some excellent falls in the semi-finals when he buttocked Sezni Le Lay twice. The Breton lad must not have been too upset by that for the Breton Federation e-mailed me with a request from him for a contact address for Douglas Parsons.

The Waberthwaite Open Night

.....saw the Carlisle contingent dominating the younger age groups. Jack Brown of Haydon Bridge won the Under 11s, Paul Murray of Arlecdon the Under 13s, and Adam Ridley the Under 15s. After that the bigger and stronger lads of the home academy took over with wins for Sandra Woodend (girls), Andrew Mason (Under 18), Philip Cowell (7st), Andrew Mason (11st), James Milburn (13st) and not unexpectedly Joe Lowery in the All Weights. Only Adam Ridley of the visitors figured in the later stages when he won the 9 stones and wrestled up at 11st.

Joe Lowery has been putting a lot of zest into the club and he has plans to take himself and the other Waberthwaite lads to more events than in recent years when the new Grass Season opens in May.

29th March 2006

TIME FOR A MAKEOVER?

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

Is it time to abandon the 150 year old traditional Cumberland and Westmorland style wrestling costume?

Kids are not going to want to take part if they don't look cool This remark about wrestling appeared in a newspaper recently..on the other side of the world. The Amateur Sumo Association of Japan suggested allowing shy youngsters to wear less revealing Sumo pants something akin to cycling shorts instead of mawashi, the traditional loin cloth. The ultra-conservative professional body which oversees the sport soon put paid to such upstart ideas saying that any boy turning up for a tournament in shorts would not be allowed to wrestle

The Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling Association had much the same debate at the recent Annual General Meeting when the traditional wrestling strip came under review. Strongly held views led to a lively debate about its benefits and disadvantages.

The basic dilemma is one of the image of the sport. On the one hand, the traditional presentation of wrestling is an important part of our regional heritage, and much used by the likes of the Tourist Board as part of the distinctive image the Lake District. Many wrestlers are proud to wear the strip which seems a natural part of the sport. Young lads are keen to wrestle in the approved strip.

On the other hand, some youngsters who wrestle cannot cope with the teasing about the quaintness of the costume with its connotations of underwear and granddads. A sad instance was given of a young lad who had his photo in the paper after winning a Boys Championship. He never wrestled again because of the ribbing he got from his peers.

Gavin Fox of Longtown pointed out that the only way to change the sport's image radically would be to ban the traditional strip so that embroidery, velvet, long-johns and costume competitions would have to go. No-one wanted to go down that road to outlaw a tradition of 150 years standing. The strip has lasted so well because it is peculiarly well suited for the sport, being lightweight and tight to the body. In a sport where an inch can make the difference between winning and losing the neat fit of the strip allows judges a clear view of a fall.

The CWWA monitors and controls wrestling each year but usually allows each event to make its own decision about what the wrestlers must wear. The basic rule says: No-one shall be allowed to weigh-in in any other costume than that in which he intends to wrestle, and no wrestler be allowed to wrestle except in becoming costume..Whilst the CWWA prefers wrestlers to compete in a strip, it acknowledges that the long-standing tradition of wrestlers coming forward from the crowd means that at many venues wrestling strips will not be compulsory. In such instances the wishes of the promoter will be accepted, provided that basic standards of decency are observed. All of which means that at most events wrestlers wear what they want.

The only time when the CWWA told wrestlers that they had to wear the traditional strip was at Senior World Championship events which are allocated round different shows and sports meetings each year.

Now that has changed, for the meeting, after much agonising, came to the conclusion that for championship events wrestlers could compete wearing tight fitting track-suit bottoms or shorts as an alternative to the traditional strip. Whether or not this rule change makes much difference remains to be seen, but the decision was an acknowledgement that no impediment should stand in the way of youngsters taking their first steps in the sport.

The priority is to maintain the athletic vigour and competitiveness of C&W Wrestling, rather than worry about what the wrestlers wear.

6th April 2006

THE MIGHTY ROBERT MCNAMARA

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

Big Mac, is set to break Ted Dunglinson's record of nine wins in the Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling All Weights World Championship this year at Powburn Show. Last Year at rainy Ambleside Sports McNamara equalled that record, and this year he goes for that tenth win.

Dunglinson's championship wins took nearly two decades to accrue for he seemed only to be nervous for those events and proved fallible. In 1954 he had 52 heavyweight wins, a record, and yet failed to win the championship.

McNamara, on the other hand, won his first title in 1997, and no-one has beaten him since. The nearest to an upset came at Alwinton Show in 2000 when Carlisle's Mark Lowry, ten stones lighter than McNamara, took the middle fall of the final with a buttock and nearly did the same in the decider. Usually, though, McNamara's wins are more straightforward, and my report of Killington 2004 could be replicated most years: Weighing in at over 23 stones, mostly bone and muscle, and quick on his feet, Big Mac waded easily through the opposition. He allowed any attacks to bounce off him and then picked his man up like a bairn, gave a quick sideways flick off the chest, and dumped him flat on the grass.

The Governing Board was keen to allocate a championship to the ancient Egremont Crab Fair where the wrestling has been in the doldrums in recent years. Nearby Waberthwaite Academy has been bringing on some good youngsters recently so there could be some local excitement there. Two championships, the 15 stones and the Under 18 Years, take place in the same field at Langholm, but on different dates and under different organisers.

The four boys events are well spread about in Lancashire, Cumbria, Scotland and Northumberland. The Academies at Kendal and Milnthorpe have a plethora of good youngsters so the Under 15 Years/8st Championship down the Blackpool road at Great Ecclestone should be a good draw.

Northumberland has a good range of championships, and already Jimmy Pringle has some hefty prize-money in place

Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling Association

World Championship Venues 2006

12st.....	Morpeth Fair, Northumberland.....	June 11th
11st.	Patterdale Country Fair.....	June 25th
10½ st.....	Penrith Show.....	July 22nd
15st.....	Langholm Common Riding.....	July 28th
All Weights.....	Powburn Show, Northumberland.....	August 5th
Under 15 Years.....	Dalston Show, Carlisle.....	August 12th
Under 18 Years/10st.....	Forestburngate, Northumberland.....	August 13th
Under 15 Years/8st.....	Great Ecclestone Show, Lancashire.....	August 13th
Under 18 Years.....	Langholm Show.....	September 30th

14st.....Westmorland County Show.....September 14th

13st.....Egremont Crab Fair.....September 16th

14th April 2006

THE CUMBERLAND AND WESTMORLAND WRESTLING ASSOCIATION.....

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

..... now has two new qualified coaches: Jason Davidson of Rothbury, Northumberland, and Tom Harrington of Carlisle.

You might think that Tom Harrington, who has been one of the main coaches at Carlisle Wrestling Club for the past 36 years, might not need a paper qualification. In addition, he was one of the assessors for the first cohort of CWWA coaches when the certification scheme was first established, so it seems strange that the assessor had to be assessed. However, Tom is still a regular and active coach at Carlisle and sport in general insists, rightly, that those people with responsibilities for training youngsters should be properly and demonstrably qualified.

Jason Davidson's case is more as you would expect when a champion wrestler looks beyond his own wrestling ambitions and decides to pass his knowledge on to the next generation. Wrestling has always had a strong following in the Coquet Valley and the new academy in Rothbury, formed only last autumn, follows those in Harbottle and Thropton, which over sixty years have launched so many champion wrestlers.

Most areas covered by the CWWA now have qualified coaches, but the next stage is to bring on good wrestlers like Joseph Robson (Kendal), Joe Threlfall (North Lancashire), Joe Lowery (West Cumbria), and Darren Whitfield (Northumberland) to qualify, and give extra support throughout the regions.

As well as involvement in coaching, there will also be a place for an active wrestler to serve on the Governing Board. The recent Wrestling Association AGM decided that wrestlers should elect their own representative who would take a full role except for disciplinary matters. Only wrestlers who are personal members would have a vote.

Democracy has even reached the actual wrestling ring, when the AGM made clear that a wrestling fall should only be awarded if there is a majority of the three judges in agreement. In the past the referee would sometimes overrule the judges, which would seem to make them redundant. That rule was changed so that, whatever the referee thought, he had to accept the decision of the two judges if they concurred. A final loop-hole was closed when the referee is no longer able to award a fall when all three arbiters differ about the decision.

Although wrestling is trying to move forward, occasionally a look over the shoulder can be productive. On a visit to Waberthwaite Academy I saw a modern version of an old wrestling system when Tom Porter gathered up a shoe from each wrestler then threw them into the ring to make the draw for who met whom on the mat. On the village greens and in the schoolyards, at a time when everyone wore a cap, that was the system for making the draw, using caps not trainers, which cut out paperwork entirely.

Tom Harrington, in his assessment session, came up with a completely original version of this old method which all our qualified coaches could use to good effect. Firstly, he picked two balanced teams; then all wrestlers threw a trainer over their shoulder onto the mat. Those landing adjacent to each other wrestled each other regardless of which team they were on. At the end of the bout each wrestler was given a score, not for winning, but for the quality of the wrestling. Thus a tiny wrestler who fought well and skilfully against a giant could gain a higher score than the actual winner of the bout. When everybody had wrestled, the scores were added up to find the winning team which would not necessarily be the one with most wins. This coaching ploy uniquely rewards each wrestler's skill and effort.

20th April 2006

ANY OLD BOOKS, PHOTOS, EPHEMERA APRIL 20TH

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

When I first moved to Carlisle in 1970 I visited the County Archives at Carlisle Castle to see what records they had of Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling.

Within an arrow's flight of the castle ramparts huge crowds had gathered for the wrestling at Carlisle Races at the Swifts from 1809; the wrestling academy in Mary Street had flourished a century ago; the old Drill Hall on Strand Road had staged major wrestling matches; and the Cumberland Show in Bitts Park had one of the biggest wrestling events of the annual calendar. But, within the Archives in 1970 only two items specifically on wrestling could be put in front of me.

That all changed when Bob Horsley died in 1997 and his widow asked me to look through his papers. Bob had written under the pseudonym of Cross-buttock in the Carlisle Journal and Clicker in the Cumberland News over a period of 29 years. I knew that he was gathering material for a book of wrestling records to cover the period from 1900, but I was totally unprepared for the mass of material stored in a floor-to-ceiling cupboard. Nor did I expect to return home with the rear of my estate car fully laden with boxes, books and files.

There were fat files of carbon copies of articles submitted to The Cumberland News; books of press clippings from 1946 onwards; a box of photographs, some of high quality and others of considerable age, including a framed photograph of Broughton Wrestlers when William Studholme was All Weights Champion in 1908; three files on the Wrestling Association; dossiers on scores of wrestling personalities and venues; a box of miscellaneous topics such as wrestling belts, women's wrestling, Cornish wrestling and so on; correspondence; old programmes and several books published in the 19th Century such as Litt's *Wrestliana* (1823) and Thomas Longmire's *Reminiscences* (1887?).

In preparation for his book he had filled a large box-file with shorthand notes dealing with sports results from 1900 to 1939. Following on from this were the year-books with all the results for the thirty years after the War and Wrestling Association championship records for 72 years.

All this material was given to the Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling association, and it in turn lodged the collection in the County Archives in Carlisle Castle where it was indexed and preserved.

For many years it was possible to sit in the search room in the Archives and browse through material which was immediately to hand, but space was at a premium and the Horsley Papers were moved to purpose-built storage at Houghton. The problem then was that any searches of the material had to be planned in advance so that papers could be brought from the store to be viewed at the tables in the search rooms of the Archives in the castle.

All that could now change for the Archives have received a grant of £4.7 million to set up the County Archives in Petteril Bank House in Old Harraby. Work is due to start in 2007 and should be completed in 2009.

The main focus of Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling has to be this season's events and training the next generation of wrestlers, but we also have a duty to the distinctive wrestling heritage of the area, and the new Archives development can be integral to this.

Anyone with old photographs, books and ephemera such as programmes and posters should think about depositing them with the County Archives to make the records of our sport as comprehensive as possible.

30th April 2006

SUMMER HAS ARRIVED APRIL 30TH

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

The unexpectedly early start to the Grass Season is not the only sign of what is to come in the wrestling rings this summer. The Primary School at Grasmere is making preparations for the Grasmere Rush Bearing in July and as part of that have found a grant to cover the expenses of wrestling coaches for a ten week spell so that the sport can be part of the celebrations. Carrie Taylor, a Governor at the school, may have set a trend by tapping into the goodwill enjoyed by the sport on a local level to provide funding for the course which will involve other schools in the area.

Although wrestling depends so much on volunteers for its organisation and coaching, most of the qualified coaches are working men who deserve to be compensated if they take time off work to pass on their skills.

100 years

Plans to mark the Centenary of the Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling Association will also give a lift to the season. The plan is to hold special Centenary events in three areas: Northumberland, North Cumbria and the Borders, and South Cumbria and Lancashire. These prestige events will be an extra for this season, only with projected prize money of £1000 for senior events, and £500 for juniors and the ladies' categories.

The arrangements have not been finalised, but the Northumbrians were talking of holding it in the Mart ring at Rothbury; South Cumbria and Lancashire will probably be part of the programme at the Westmorland County Show; and North Cumbria plans to stage the All Weights and Boys Under 15 Years at the Cumberland Show, and the Ladies' Centenary event at Penrith Show.

Appropriately, Governing Board Member and former World Champion, Alan Coulthard, happens to be the President of the Cumberland Show Committee this year so he is keen to support this prestigious event.

On the last Friday in October, at the end of the wrestling year, the CWWA is to hold a Centenary Night at the Shepherd's Inn, Carlisle, when the main item on the agenda will be non-stop crack about who felled whom with what over the past sixty years. The hope is to emulate the grand evening enjoyed by so many wrestlers old and new at Shap Wells Hotel a few years back organised by John Richardson.

European Espoirs Championship

Around the same period the CWWA will host the European Espoirs Championships when young wrestlers (16 to 21 years) from up to nine countries will compete in two types of wrestling, Gouren from Brittany and our own C&W style. A committee is in the process of being formed, so anyone who would like to be part of the organisation should contact me on 016974 73559.

The extent of our international contacts was reinforced when Alf Harrington and family were returning from a holiday in France. As they took their places for a meal on the ferry, still five hundred miles from home, the waiter asked how the wrestling was going in Carlisle. A few years ago Sylvain Begoc spent the best part of a year working in Carlisle to improve his English and his wrestling. Ironically, we probably gained more than he did, for Sylvain was an excellent Gouren coach who boosted the skill levels of Andrew Carlile and David Atkinson to enable them to be a match for any wrestler in the international events.

Now the two Carlisle wrestlers are keen to pass those skills on another step in preparation for the Espoirs Championships.

22nd May 2006

THE WRESTLING RING.....

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

was hard as rock; the air was perishingly cold; but the action in the ring transcended the conditions at the North Cumbria Young Farmers Club Field Day at The Howes, Calthwaite.

The usual subjects were there, wrestling with assured skill to win precious points for their clubs: Richard Dixon (Wigton) won the 11½st class, buttocking and hanking; and two of wrestling's best, John Harrington (Caldbeck) and Richard Fox (Longtown), needed three exciting bouts before Harrington came out on top.

But, the Field Day is also a place for excellence from unknown sources. Michael Norman (Carlisle) only wrestles at the Field Day, and he missed last year's event, but his 11½st semi-final bouts stick in the mind as the sort of intense violent action that can be switched on and off in the best of Cumberland and Westmorland wrestling. James Mattinson (Brampton) won the lightweights from a big field with instinctive skill. Fiona Reid (Brampton) seemed to be up against it in the Women's 11st, meeting significantly heavier opposition and suffering a jarred shoulder in the semi-final, but always getting the last twist to come out on top.

And, Katie Wigham (Kirkclinton) straight from the final of the Women's Arm Wrestling, attacked the opposition with gusto. She lost a few falls, but persevered with her attacking style, and some burgeoning skill to win the Women's All Weights. It's rougher than rugby says she.

The season is poised to start in earnest in the coming weeks with four events in the next fortnight, including the 12st Championship at Morpeth Gala.

Results:

North Cumbria YFC Field Day

9½st : 1, J Mattinson (Brampton); 2, W Cartmell (Penrith); 3, S Wood (Drigg).

11½st : 1, R Dixon (Wigton); 2, M Norman (Carlisle); 3, John Harrington (Caldbeck).

All Weights : 1, John Harrington (Caldbeck); 2, R Fox (Longtown); 3, K Fox (Walton).

Women's 11st :1, F Reid (Brampton); 2, J Armstrong (Longtown); 3, S Ritson (Aspatria).

Women's All Weights :1, K Wigham (Kirklington); 2, C Steele (Drigg); 3, L Atkinson (Aspatria)

Forthcoming Dates:

May 29th (Mon) Northumberland Show, Corbridge

June 1st (Thu) Killington Sports

June 10th (Sat) Roman Wall Show

June 11th (Sun) Morpeth, including the 12st World Championship.

30th May 2006

SEDBERGH GALA.....

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

..... opened up the 2006 wrestling season in South Cumbria, and immediately proved how well the academies at Kendal and Milnthorpe had prepared their wrestlers.

For some odd reason the Kendal area senior wrestlers are almost universally heavyweights. Lighter wrestlers tend to have several years of growing to do. Hence, in the All Weights, Kendal wrestlers took all three places. In the early rounds they saw off the threat from the North, in the shape of several younger and lighter wrestlers from Carlisle Wrestling Club. Joe Threlfall, from the South, i.e. Preston, began well with a hipe against Trevor Hodgson of Dent, but Hodgson fought back to win the next two bouts with a back-heel and twists. In the semi-final, Joseph Robson of Grayrigg in turn, inside-hiped Hodgson, twice.

This, appropriately, set up a final between the two main coaches at Kendal Academy, Robson and John Wilson. Robson, the 14st Champion, showed no ring-rust after being laid off from wrestling for most of last season with a shoulder injury, as he went on to hipe and twist back for the first fall and buttock for the second.

In the 13 stones, Carlisle wrestlers dominated, but also eliminated each other, so that only Richard Dixon in third place and John Harrington the winner made it into the prize money. Graham Brocklebank had done well to make it to the final but he made little impression on John Harrington who hiped him for one fall and then snapped in at him with an inside-click to put him on his back for the second fall.

Brocklebank, the Under 15 Years Champion, has been a good wrestler for some years, and on the evidence of Sedbergh, that progress goes on. In the final of the Under 16 Years, Douglas Parsons from Milnthorpe Academy, had no answer to Brocklebank's power and technique, but neither did anyone else in the entry.

One of the best finals of the day came in the Boys' Under 14 Years, when Stuart Mason of Milnthorpe Academy registered a good win after four holds with Scott Brocklebank of Warton. Brocklebank had an excellent strike rate last year, and was the heavier lad, but Mason persevered after losing the first fall to emerge the winner, eventually.

Ben Brocklebank was another wrestler who spent time out of the ring last season through injury, so his skilful win in the Under 12 Years final against William Hayhurst, hanking and buttocking for the deciding falls, must have had extra zest.

Results: Sedbergh Gala

Under 12 Years: 1, B Brocklebank; 2, W Hayhurst; 3,

Under 14 Years: 1, S Mason; 2, S Brocklebank; 3, B Brocklebank.

Under 16 Years: 1. G Brocklebank; 2, Douglas Parsons; 3, S Brocklebank.

13st: 1, John Harrington; 2, G Brocklebank; 3, R Dixon.

All Weights: 1, J Robson; 2, J Wilson; 3, T Hodgson.

Dates:

29 May (Mon) 1.30pm - Corbridge Show - U14/U18/11½/13½/AW

1 June(Thu)- Killington

10 June (Sat)- Roman Wall Show

11 June (Sun)- Morpeth- 12st Championship

17 June (Sat) - Kirkheaton

3rd June 2006

THE NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY SHOW AT CORBRIDGE - JUNE 1ST

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

had a wrestling success on its hands: a bigger ring, bigger crowd, bigger entry, and big performances throughout the wrestling programme.

An important element of this excellent event was the arrival in the ring of the first products of the recently re-formed Rothbury Academy. Their coaches, Jason Davidson and Darren Whitfield, had kept the club going right into the wrestling season, in case they lost contact with the lads who had trained throughout the winter. The success of that policy was a big turnout in the boys' events and success, particularly for Jack Haile and Scott McKenzie who wrestled out the Under 14 Years final, and Andrew Ord who wrestled up to Joe Harrington of Kirkbampton in the Under 18 Years.

Northumbrians had other successes unrelated to the new academy: James Raine of West Woodburn began the wrestling programme by giving a passable imitation of Heavyweight Champion Robert McNamara, lifting his opponents high on his chest before twisting them to the ground; and Richard Younger of Ponteland showed immense power in flicking the huge Darren Whitfield up and back from an unpromising position in the semi-final of the All Weights.

The Northumbrian heavyweights had eliminated each other one by one whilst Richard Dixon of Lessonhall made his skilful way up the other side of the draw, buoyed by winning against John Harrington in the first round after a series of hard bouts with him in the previous two weights. The result was that Dixon, the lightest in the field weighing in at around 10st, came face to face with Richard Younger who had tested the scales at 17½st. Faced with this weight and power Dixon tried the hank but was felled off it. Younger relaxed in the next fall, giving Dixon a good ride out on a swinging hipe before grounding him.

Three Carlisle trained wrestlers took the rest of the spoils. Joe Harrington gave a master class in the Under 18 Years, hiping all the way, and rounding it off with a big lift and twist back on Andrew Ord, one of the talents from Rothbury. The Carlisle wrestlers cancelled each other out in the 11½ stones. Richard Dixon took three falls to beat Andrew Carlile in the first round. Then John Harrington had to be at his very best to fell Dixon in the semi-final. Dixon was riding the swings and hipes, but Harrington got him at the third attempt in their final bout. Harrington of Bewaldeth then won the 11½ stones by cross-clicking and inside-hiping Simon Hamilton of Belsay.

John Harrington was also involved with the final of the 13½ stones when he felled Richard Fox of Longtown with a hipe for the first fall. After a dog-fall for the second hold, Fox got into gear and buttocked spectacularly - twice.

Results: Northumberland County Show

Under 12 Years: 1, J Raine; 2, J Brown; 3, M Palmer.

Under 14 Years: 1, J Haile; 2, S McKenzie; 3, J Brown.

Under 18 Years: 1, Joe Harrington; 2, A Ord; 3, F Healey.

11½st: 1, John Harrington; 2, S Hamilton; 3, R Dixon.

13½st: 1, R Fox; 2, John Harrington; 3, A Carlile.

All Weights: 1, R Younger; 2, R Dixon; 3, D Whitfield

Killington Sports.....

.....is another country, a lost world, part of my childhood fifty years ago, when every village had its sports with potato, three-legged, sack, fell and sprint races, pillow fights and wrestling. Only the egg-throwing event is new fangled since War-time rationing ended.

Year by year this event, lost along the narrow lanes and thick hedges of South Cumbria, draws wrestlers and runners in their droves. Jack Haile, for example, came all the way from Rothbury in Northumberland to register his second win in four days when he felled Scott Brocklebank in the final of the Under 15 Years. Brocklebank has grown stronger and taller, but went down to Haile's persistent leg-up buttock for the first fall. He rallied to take the second fall but Haile went on to take the decider.

Richard Fox and Joe Harrington, members of Carlisle Wrestling Club, also made the journey and entertained the crowd with a series of close bouts with tricky footwork and sudden twists as the advantage veered back and forth. Fox eventually won the 13st final in straight falls, but Harrington pushed him every inch of the way.

The rest of the spoils went to Kendal Academy wrestlers. Tracey Hodgson proved to be top sister in the girls' wrestling when she felled both Hannah and Connie. Ben Brocklebank continued his excellent season in felling the Northumbrian, Jack Brown, in the final of the Under 12 Years. And, top of the pile was Joseph Robson who felled the heavy men, John Wilson and Jason Davidson, on his way to the All Weights final with the middleweight winner Richard Fox. Robson seemed to be cruising when he won the first fall of the final, but a dog fall and a win by Fox set up tense decider as the last bout of the day. This time Robson, the bigger man, won by finesse when he cross-buttocked neatly to win.

Jack Brown of Haydon Bridge, who trained regularly at Carlisle during the winter, arrived two hours early to the sports field with his father and Peter Hunter. Five hours later he was still going strong. He may have only gained second place in the wrestling, but he won lots of other events including the Junior Fell Race.

One of the highlights for me as referee was weighing in the 13 stone men. Although the scales were rusty and dusty, they were nicely balanced..once we removed the dead crow from the innards! With five minutes to go, the weights only added up to 12 stones, but a committee man rushed home and saved the day by returning with a stone of sheep feed in a bag to make up the rest.

Results: Killington Sports June 2nd

Under 12 Years: 1, B Brocklebank; 2, J Brown; 3, D Hodgson.

Under 15 Years: 1, J. Haile; 2, S Brocklebank; 3, J Ewart.

Girls Under: 16 Years 1, T Hodgson; 2, H Hodgson; 3, C Hodgson.

13st: 1, R Fox; 2, Joe Harrington; 3, S Wilkinson.

All Weights: 1, J Robson; 2, R Fox; 3, Joe Harrington

10th June 2006

THE 12ST WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP AT MORPETH.....

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

.....had a small entry, but the wrestling was of the highest calibre. Any one of four Carlisle Academy wrestlers had the ability to take the title and they slowly eliminated each other with a series of close skilful bouts.

First into the ring were Richard Dixon of Lessonhall and Richard Fox of Longtown. Inches made the difference between them. After a dog-fall in their second hold, Dixon clinched the win in the third bout when he stopped Fox's buttock and drove him forward. Each wrestler strove to keep his head from touching first, but Dixon found leverage from his long legs to drive Fox into the ground.

The other two Carlisle wrestlers, the holder John Harrington and the 10½st Champion Andrew Carlile, also met in the first round. The first bout ended messily with Harrington trying to hank and Carlile twisting him down first, but only just. The second bout was much more decisive when Carlile jumped ahead of Harrington's hipe and on landing went straight into a leg-up buttock which brought his man cleanly over.

After some mopping up of local opposition Dixon and Carlile met in the final. The first bout saw Carlile pushing for hold and driving round anti-clockwise as is usual, but he was using these movements as feints to set up his opponent for a sudden unconventional clockwise swirling twist, finished off with a little nudge from his knee. The second bout was a longer affair as the two wrestlers jockeyed for position, Carlile with all the hold and Dixon with a strong hank in place. After a few failed attempts to get rid of the hank, Carlile gave up on the idea of keeping Dixon up in the air and instead reached to click the hanker's standing leg to push him forward and down. Dixon took evasive action and the two wrestlers were briefly balanced side by side. The win would go to whichever wrestler got his knee forward first to act as a pivot, and that was what Carlile did to take the fall.

Dixon's day was not over for he wrestled through to the final of the All Weights where the power of Richard Younger was unstoppable.

The defeated champion John Harrington did not leave empty-handed for he won the 14½ stons in a tough final with Alan Jones. The day before he had been going even better, for at the Roman Wall Show he won both the 11½ stons and the 13½ stons, before taking on Darren Whitfield in the final of the All weights, where Whitfield had too much weight and too much off for Harrington to succeed.

Another wrestler had a win at both events; Andrew Ord is young, tall and powerful, and has been well schooled at Rothbury Academy. He uses his height well, lifting and hiping the opposition.

Results: Roman wall Show

Under 12 Years: 1, J Raine; 2, J Brown; 3, R Palmer.

Under 17 Years: 1, A Ord; 2, A Ridley; 3, C Ridley.

11½st: 1, John Harrington; 2, F Healey; 3, A Ridley.

13½st: 1, John Harrington; 2, R Fox; 3, A Ord.

All Weights: 1, D Whitfield; 2, John Harrington; 3, R Leiper.

Morpeth Gala

Under 12 Years: 1, J Brown; 2, T Kelly; 3, C Whitfield.

Under 16 Years: 1, W Noimai; 2, D Crane; 3, S McKenzie.

Under 18 Years: 1, A Ord; 2, A Duthie; 3, S McKenzie.

12st World Championship: 1, A Carlile; 2, R Dixon; 3, S McKenzie.

14½st: 1, John Harrington; 2, A Jones; 3, R Fox.

All Weights: 1, R Younger; 2, R Dixon; 3, R Leiper.

Dates:

June 17 (Sat) 3.30pm Kirkheaton U12/U15/U18/15st/AW

June 18 Sun) (11pm) Silloth U12/U15/U18/11½/13/AW

June 25 (Sun) (2pm) Patterdale U12/U15/U18/11st Championship/13/AW

July1 (Sat) Alston Gala

30th June 2006

ANDREW CARLILE OF CARLISLE

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

..... has a good eye for antique silverware and his collection was enhanced further at Patterdale where he won the 11 stones World Championship of Cumberland and Westmorland Style Wrestling.

Carlile's way was considerably smoothed when the holder, John Harrington, was weighed out before the action started. A good contingent of Kendal and Milnthorpe wrestlers played a good part in the action, but in the end two wrestlers from Carlisle Wrestling Club fought out the final. Richard Dixon, the present Under 18 Champion had faced Carlile in the 12st final at Morpeth a fortnight ago, but this time he made a better start, going ahead with a twist and a half buttock.

Carlile has added a new chip to his repertoire recently when he seems to be fighting for hold before quickly changing direction, stepping back with his right leg while twisting clockwise and down, sometimes adding a nudge with his right knee or foot to finish the move. He had used it successfully in the final at Morpeth, and it saved the day for him at Patterdale, twice.

Carlile currently holds three championships: the 10½ stones from Skelton Show last year, the 12 stones from Morpeth two weeks ago and last week's 11 stones. Unlike many of the Wrestling Association trophies, the 11st giant has always been allocated to the same category since 1906 when it was the heaviest weight below the All Weights. Now, with extra nutrition, the 11 stones is regarded as lightweights and the Championship weight categories go up to 15 stones.

Frustrated

The frustrated John Harrington at last got into action in the 13 stones where he felled Andrew Carlile in a three fall bout ending with a flowing swinging inside-hipe. Unfortunately, that form came to a halt in the final against Richard Dixon, when he fell in a way which would have broken me in several places. He was unable to continue, but the latest news is that no serious damage was done.

The All Weights brought in another dimension: Thomas Brocklebank of Warton. At Killington he looked on with a hand in plaster, but he had no impediments at Patterdale and hoisted all-comers high and handsome before flicking their legs sideways and grounding them. His brothers had already set the pace for him in the boys events, for Ben won the Under 12 Years by beating Rory Hodgson, a product of the Grasmere School coaching scheme, in the final. And Graham Brocklebank was in good form beating Sam Wilkinson in the final of the Under 18 Years.

The other winner was Jack Ewart of Westward who I prophesy will have no more wins in the Under 15 Years, on the basis that as you read this he has had another birthday. He certainly added to the entertainment at Patterdale with his final hurrah as he picked his way through the excellent young wrestlers from Milnthorpe Academy. His very last bout as a 14 year-old saw him digging deep with a leg-up buttock against Stuart Mason.

Results:

Under 12 Years: 1, B Brocklebank; 2, R Hodgson; 3, J Brown.

Under 15 Years: 1, J Ewart; 2, S Manon; 3, T Barnes.

Under 18 Years: 1, G Brocklebank; 2, S Wilkinson; 3, A Ord.

11st World Championship: 1, A Carlile; 2, R Dixon; 3, S Wilkinson.

13st: 1, R Dixon; 2, John Harrington; 3, A Carlile.

All weights: 1, T Brocklebank; 2, A Carlile; 3, A Ord.

Dates:

1 July (Sat) - 2pm - Alston Gala - U12/U15/U18/11½/13/AW/ladies

2 July (Sun) - Langdale Gala | 2pm - Distington - U12/U15/U18/12½/AW

7 July (Fri) - 7.30pm - Plumbland - U12/U15/U18/13/AW

9 July (Sun) - Haltwhistle

15 July (Sat) 4pm - Cumberland Show - U15yrs CC & All Weights CC

6th July 2006

CUMBERLAND AND WESTMORLAND WRESTLING WAS A FESTIVAL OF YOUTH.....

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

.....last week at Alston Gala, Langdale Gala and Distington Vintage Rally. It was not intended to be like that, but that was the way it worked out. The young wrestlers turned out well and travelled big distances to compete. The senior wrestlers were non-existent except for Thomas Brocklebank at Langdale.

The best competitions were at Langdale where boys from three academies, Carlisle Kendal and Milnthorpe met on neutral ground to compete. In addition boys from Grasmere School who are being coached by Alan Jones and Andrew Carlile showed off their new-found skills. The most exciting wrestling of the day came when Graeme Benson and Graham Brocklebank met in two finals. In the Under 18 Years Benson had the best of it, then that changed when Brocklebank beat him in the final of the 12½ stones.

Benson, a local farmer's son from the Langdale Valley and a member of Kendal Rugby Club, did well without tuition when he first arrived on the scene, but now that he has had a winter of practice at Kendal Academy, he is more assured and skilled. Brocklebank, son of Harry and grandson of Wilf, who were both Heavyweight World Champions, has one of the best pedigrees in the sport. He goes for his chips with power and dash, and as often as not finishes with a somersault over his prone opponent.

Alston and Langdale

Several wrestlers competed at both Alston and Langdale with mixed results. Jack Brown of Haydon Bridge had to give best to the massive James Raine at Alston, but had the upper hand over the Grasmere pupils at Langdale. Scott Brocklebank had a good time at Alston where he felled Fin Healy in the Under 15 years, but failed to make much of a mark at Langdale. Much the same applied to Fin Healy of Tynemouth who had his first senior win when he felled Adam Ridley in the final of the 11½ stones at Alston, but failed to register a win the next day.

Adam Ridley of nearby Slaggyford failed to win at his local event, but he remedied that the next day in the middle of the Lake District at Langdale with his careful, thoughtful style of wrestling, while the tall young newcomer, Andrew Ord from Morpeth, did best of all at Alston by outside-hiping his way to two wins, at Under 18 Years and 13 stones.

A local novice, Bradley Elliott won the All Weights in style, felling a wrestler who was making his first and last appearance in the ring. Brendan Healy, Fin's dad, decided to see what it was like to tread the ring and he reached the final and survived, only to be met by the you-should-have-more-sense-at-your-age argument when he got home.

Distington

Despite a lack of regular wrestlers at Distington the event went off well because of local support. Particularly impressive was Adam Conway who won the All Weights. He had a good stance, strong twist and finished with buttocks. Paul Murray, who travels from West Cumbria to Carlisle for his training in the wintertime, not unexpectedly won the Under 15 Years.

The Cumberland Show will host the first of the Centenary Challenges which will celebrate the hundredth birthday of the CWWA. In addition to the usual programme of wrestling there will be £500 prizemoney and a medal for the Under 15 Years Centenary Challenge and £1000 for the All Weights Men.

Alston Gala

Under 12 Years: 1, J Raine; 2, J Brown; 3, J Smith.

Under 15 Years: 1, S Brocklebank; 2, F Healy; 3, C Ridley.

Under 18 Years: 1, A Ord; 2, C Ridley; 3, A Ridley.

11½st: 1, F Healy; 2, A Ridley; 3, S Brocklebank

13st: 1, A Ord; 2, B Elliott; 3, A Ridley.

All Weights: 1, B Elliott; 2, B Healy; 3, A Ord.

Ladies: 1, D Thompson; 2, B Kennedy; 3, K Brown.

Langdale Gala

Under 12 Years: 1, J Brown; 2, H Barnes; 3, P Squires.

Under 15 Years 1, A Ridley; 2, F Healy; 3, S Broclebank.

Under 18 Years: 1, G Benson; 2, G Brocklebank; 3, T Mason.

12½st: 1, G Brocklebank; 2, G Benson; 3, S Wilkinson.

All Weights: 1, T Brocklebank; 2, G Benson; 3, G Brocklebank

Distington Vintage Rally

Under 12 Years: 1, L Harkness; 2, A Chorley.

Under 15 Years: 1, P Murray; 2, L Harkness; 3, J Thompson.

Under 18 Years: 1, D Scott; 2, J Friel; 3, J Thompson.

12½st: 1, D Hewer; 2, C Haig; 3, D Scott.

All Weights: 1, A Conway; 2, S Harkness; 3, D Hewer.

Dates:

July 7 (Fri) 7.30pm Plumbland U12/U15/U18/13/AW

Ju;y 9 (Sun) 2pm Haltwhistle U12/U15/U18/Novice/11½/13/AW

July 15 (Sat) 4pm Cumberland Show U12/U15 CC/U18/12/14/AW CC

July 16 (Sun) Great Ecclestone includes U15yrs/8st Ch'ship

14th July 2006

ALL EYES OF WRESTLING FANS.....

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

will be on the competitions at the Cumberland Show late tomorrow afternoon (July 16th) when the first of the Centenary Challenges will take place with enhanced prize-money to celebrate the Centenary of the Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling Association. The £1000 prize-money for the All Weights is exceptional though it has been done before, but the £500 for the Under 15 Years takes boys' wrestling into new territory. The following Saturday it is the turn of the women at Penrith Show when they compete for £500.

The Centenary Challenges have certainly sent a buzz round the wrestlers, but last week it was the turn of grass roots wrestling at Plumbland where the tug-o-war teams at the village sports made up the bulk of the entry - bulk being the operative word. There were some regular wrestlers there, with Jack Brown winning the Under 12 Years and wrestling well enough against the odds in later weights, to win the trophy for the best performance in the wrestling. Phil Housby

is a regular at Carlisle Wrestling Club during the winter and he duly back-heeled his way to victory in the Under 18 Years. John Harrington, nursing a dubious ankle from a previous week's bout, still had enough spare capacity to win the 13 stones with Phil Housby's dad Sid making a surprise appearance.

The main fun came in the All Weights when Sid Housby performed well to wrestle up in his second final, but was well beaten by A Douglas who was all shoulders and determination. The referee, multi-Champion Tom Harrington, was so impressed by Douglas's hipes and twists that he immediately set about persuading him to compete in the Centenary Challenge at Carlisle tomorrow.

The other wrestling of the weekend was at Haltwhistle Gala where Adam Ridley of Slaggyford was acclaimed as the best wrestler of the day with his thoughtful, slick wrestling. His only win of the day came in the Novices, but he also competed gamely against bigger opposition throughout the day.

Two Harringtons were also on good form. Joe from Kirkbride won the Under 18 Years at a canter and then half-cousin John from Bewaldeth took over in the next two weights, winning good falls with the swinging hipe.

In the All Weights against Alan Jones he was so busy keeping his injured leg out of range that he could not mount a good enough defence to keep Jones at bay. Jones then had lightweight Jonjo Pattinson to control in the final. For Pattinson this was his first wrestling of the year, so his three second places was a fair reward.

Results:

Plumbland

Under 12 Years: 1, J Brown; 2, B Kennedy; 3, B Williams.

Under 15 Years: 1, K Brown; 2, J Brown; 3, B Kennedy.

Under 18 Years: 1, P Housby; 2, W Noimai; 3, J Brown.

13st: 1, John Harrington; 2, S Housby; 3, G Pattinson.

All Weights: 1, A Douglas; 2, S Housby; 3, M Hedley.

Haltwhistle Gala

Under 12 Years: 1, J Brown; 2, R Walton; 3, R Main.

Under 15 Years: 1, F Healy; 2, A Ridley; 3, S Brocklebank.

Under 18 Years: 1, Joe Harrington; 2, A Ridley; 3, S Brocklebank.

Novice: 1, A Ridley; 2, C Ridley; 3, S Brocklebank.

11½st: 1, John Harrington; 2, J Pattinson; 3, C Ridley.

13st: 1, John Harrington; 2, J Pattinson; 3, A Ridley.

All Weights: 1, A Jones; 2, J Pattinson; 3, John Harrington.

Dates:

July 15th (Sat) 4pm Cumberland Show U12/U15 CC/U18/12/14/AW CC

July 16th (Sun) Great Ecclestone U15yrs/8st Ch'ship

July 22nd (Sat) 1pm Penrith Show U12/U15/U18/10½st
Championship/13/AW Ladies Centenary Challenge.

July 23rd (Sun) 3pm Coniston

July 27th (Thu) Ambleside

25th July 2006

WHERE DO YOU START?

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

.....said my wife as I sat down to write this, for the Cumberland Show with the two Centenary Challenges and other excitements in Rickerby Park and a boys' championship at Great Ecclestone Show had provided a bumper week for Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling.

The big prize-money for the Centenary Challenges certainly brought out the wrestlers in droves at the Cumberland Show and kept a big crowd happily entertained for three hours in the evening sun.

Biggest and best was Rab McNamara of East Kilbride, Heavyweight Champion for the last nine years who won the £500 first prize for the All Weights Centenary Challenge. He has always been a formidable figure, and it would seem that other wrestlers may have to rely on his age and injuries to be able to stand a chance. One look at him as he stood up to walk into the ring for his first bout annihilated any such hopes for he was heavier than ever at 24 stones and was as fit as a butcher's dog.

Local livestock auctioneer, John Wharton, is big and strong, but he looked like a boy as Mighty Mac hoited him and flicked him sideways on his chest. Even when McNamara met another massive opponent, Russell Housby, in the semi-final, he still eased him into the air before twisting to win.

The final, was a complete mismatch for weight as Richard Fox had stolen up the other side of the draw and then got a bye into the final. Fox was taking someone on who was literally twice his weight. Fox to his credit made a fight of it, hiding from the power and trying to keep McNamara moving, but such was the weight discrepancy that Big Mac was easily able to cope and hiped Fox to win.

Robert McNamara once applied to be a Prison Warder in Barlinnie Gaol in Glasgow, and was turned down for being overweight! On this week's showing he could have blocked any prison corridor on his own.

The winner of the Boys Under 15 Years Centenary Challenge was Fin Healy of Tynemouth who has flourished this season by his keenness and competitive will, for he has had no access to specialised training. In the third round he felled the skilful Adam Ridley with hipes and a well chosen left leg back-heel. And after a bye into the final he met there a wrestler scarcely known to him, Stuart Mason of Milnthorpe Academy. Healy had the edge all the way with Mason coming close in the second fall with a leg up buttock which was adjudged a dog fall. The matter of who won the £250 first prize was finally settled when Healy brought Mason to ground with a typical backover twist.

Two notable Carlisle wrestlers made their return to the ring after injury: David Atkinson announced he was back after breaking his leg a year ago at Ambleside with his trademark hipe off the right hip. He wrestled well until the final when Kendal Academy's Chief Coach John Wilson gave him a lesson in buttocking.

Mark Lowry came bustling and bouncing into the ring as if he had never been away and made the crowd gasp at the sudden violence of his buttocking. His campaign ended when Thomas Brocklebank coped with the speedy attacks.

Richard Fox was awarded the Guinness Trophy for the best performance for the second year in a row, by that fine former lightweight champion, Jimmy Atkinson. Fox, by his own high standards, had done less well in the lighter weights, but his campaign to reach the final of the All Weights impressed the judge.

John Harrington won the 12 stones despite carrying an injury. West Cumbria provided a worthy winner in a strong Under 18 Years class: James Benn of Millom, also broke his leg last year, but was able to swing and twist Graham Brocklebank for his first win of the season. The youngest boys' class was won by a young giant, James Raine of West Woodburn in Northumberland.

Great Ecclestone Show hosted the Boys Championship at Under 15 Years and 8st. Last year Adam Ridley of Slaggyford won it at Allendale. This year it goes back to the same house when younger brother Craig Ridley felled Jack Brown in the final. When Craig Ridley first turned up to train at Carlisle Wrestling Club he showed all the fast reactions and instincts that you look for in a good wrestler. Now with two years' training under his belt he is now fulfilling his potential.

The Brocklebank family from Warton in Lancashire did particularly well with each of the three brothers, Ben, Graham and Thomas taking first prizes, but it was Craig Ridley who was awarded the Bill Threlfall Memorial Trophy for the best performance.

Tomorrow sees the Ladies Open Centenary Challenge at Penrith Show with prize-money of £500. The organisers are also signalling their support for the traditional wrestling strip by giving a good prize for the costume competition.

Results:

Cumberland Show

Under 12 Years: 1, J Raine; 2, J Brown; 3, B Wilde.

Under 15 Years Centenary Challenge: 1, F Healy; 2, S Mason; 3, C Ridley.

Under 18 Years: 1, J Benn; 2, G Brocklebank; 3, C Lowry.

12st: 1, John Harrington; 2, A Carlile; 3, R Dixon.

14st: 1, J Wilson; 2, D Atkinson; 3, John Harrington.

All Weights Centenary Challenge: 1, R McNamara; 2, R Fox; 3, R Housby.

Guinness Trophy: R Fox.

Great Ecclestone Show:

Under 12 Years: 1, B Brocklebank; 2, W Hayhurst; 3, J Brown.

Under 15 Years/8st World Championship: 1, C Ridley; 2, J Brown; 3, C Inman.

Under 15 Years: 1, S Mason; 2, D Easom; C Ridley.

Under 18 Years: 1, G Brocklebank; 2, S Mason; 3, C Ridley.

13st: 1, G Brocklebank; 2, C Ridley; 3, C Threlfall.

All Weights: 1, T Brocklebank; 2, G Brocklebank; 3, R Threlfall.

Dates:

July 22 (Sat) 1pm Penrith U12/U15/U18/10½Chship/13/AW/Ladies Open Centenary Challenge

July 23 (Sun) 3pm Coniston U12/U15/U18/11½/13/AW

July 27 (Thu) 1pm Ambleside U12/U15/U18/11½/12½/14/AW

July 28 (Fri) 2.30pm Langholm Common Riding U12/U16/12½/15Chship/AW

July 29 (Sat) 1pm Cockermouth U12/U15/U18/11½/13½/AW

July 30 (Sun) 12 noon Flookburgh U12/U15/U18/11½/13/AW

1st August 2006



(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

Andrew Carlile retained the 10½st World Championship of Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling

at Penrith Show and in doing so completed a set of three championships won this year.

After a year or two when some of the younger wrestlers were giving him a hard time, this season he has proved himself harder, quicker and cleverer than ever before. Paul Barnes of Dearham gave him a good run for his money in the final with a bustling first bout full of buttocks and twists until Carlile stopped it all and rushed him forward off his

right hip. The second fall was clear indication of how his thoughts have become instinct: Barnes made a good attempt at the buttock, but Carlile stabbed his foot down in front of the buttocker's leg to act as the crucial pivot to win the fall.

Good though the final was, the real test for Carlile came in the semi-final when Richard Dixon of Lessonhall took the first fall with his trademark buttock. Carlile fought back with crisp counters to that buttock and a hank in the next two falls to keep on course for the triple championship.

As well as entertaining the crowds in the ring, Carlile is a qualified coach of the sport and gives a lot of his time to the youngsters at Carlisle Wrestling Club in the Winter months. He also coaches the Breton style and is an active member of the organising committee for the European Espoirs (Youth) Championships of Celtic Wrestling which comes to Carlisle in October.

The Centenary Challenge for Women Wrestlers was a great success at Penrith Show. Fifteen entered and there was a series of tough bouts beginning with Tracey Hodgson of Dent's dispatch of the Ayrshire Firewoman, Denise Turley, with a flurry of twists. Tracey Hodgson continued in the same vein throughout until she felled Katie Wigham of Kirklington in the final. Tracey Hodgson was our most successful female wrestler last year, and she is even more formidable now.

Welcome back, David Atkinson. A year ago at Ambleside Sports, he sustained a bad break just above the ankle which needed pinning and slow convalescence. He tested the water at the Cumberland Show and came second, and at Penrith he got back to his winning ways in the 13 stones. John Harrington in the semi-final took the middle fall with an inside click, but Atkinson won the decider with lots of shouting and hipping until his man hit the ground. Joe Harrington, the winner of the Under 18 Years, is a good hiber, but in the 13st final he was out-hiped by Atkinson.

The hipping theme continued in the All Weights when the Kendal wrestler Joe Robson used one to fell his club-mate Trevor Hodgson for the first score in the final. The winning fall was a lightning strike and a swirl.

At Coniston the Brocklebank family had a near monopoly with the three brothers, Ben, Graham, and Thomas all winning, as well as half-cousin Scott who won the Under 15 Years. John Harrington showed his class by winning both the 11½ and 13 stones, though he was well tested by Graeme Benson of Langdale and Richard Knowles of Bootle.

Results:

Penrith Show

Under 12 Years: 1, B Broclebank; 2, J Brown; 3, C Sewell.

Under 15 Years: 1, F Healy; 2, D Parsons; 3, S Brocklebank.

Under 18 Years: 1, Joe Harrington; 2, J Desborough; 3, W Noimai.

10½st World Championship: 1, A Carlile; 2, P Barnes; 3, R Dixon.

13st: 1, D Atkinson; 2, Joe Harrington; 3, R Dixon.

All Weights: 1, J Robson; 2, T Hodgson; 3, J Davidson.

Coniston

Under 12 Years: 1, B Broclebank; 2, M Porter; 3, J Brown.

Under 15 Years: 1, S Broclebank; 2, J Simcock; 3, P Murray.

Under 18 Years: 1, G Broclebank; 2, G Benson; 3, W Noimai.

11½st: 1, John Harrington; 2, R Knowles; 3, G Benson.

13st: 1, John Harrington; 2, D Barnes; 3, G Benson.

All Weights: 1, T Broclebank; 2, S Fleming; 3, John Harrington.

Dates:

July 28 (Fri) 2.30pm Langholm Common Riding U12/U16/12½/15Chship/AW

July 29 (Sat) 1pm Cockermouth U12/U15/U18/11½/13½/AW

July 30 (Sun) 12 noon Flookburgh U12/U15/U18/11½/13/AW

August 5 (Sat) Beetham

Powburn All Weights Ch'ship

August 6 (Sun) 12.30pm Lowther U12/U15/U18/Ladies/12/14/AW (Costume required)

3rd August 2006

WHEN JOSEPH ROBSON OF GRAYRIGG WRESTLES

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

.....as well as he did last week, I am tempted to claim him as close next of kin, but in fact he is only my father's great-great-nephew. Last year he won the 14st World Championship at the Cumberland Show, then sustained an injury in the All Weights that kept him out of the ring for virtually the rest of the season.

This season he has risen to new levels, and last week he won the All Weights at Ambleside and Langholm, in addition to the 15st World Championship at Langholm. In the Championship his route to the final was far from easy. Richard Fox in the first round gave him a fright by taking a fall with a right side buttock, but Robson took the decider with a hipe and a twist over the knee. Thereafter he felled Alan Jones, Robert Leiper and Jason Davidson with the same combination of chips: one fall would come from a buttock, the other from a hipe. His final fall against Davidson in the final was a hipe off a back-heel which sent long legs flying all ways.

The savants round the ring agreed that his wrestling is refreshingly instinctive, which of course belies the years of coaching and training at Kendal Academy. He has the confidence to launch an attack without necessarily knowing where it will go, for he has so many twists and buttocks and so much strength and speed that he can usually rescue himself when he finds trouble.

The Harrington clan and off-shoots, all of them cousins, did especially well at Ambleside, with Joe Harrington of Kirkbampton winning the Under 18s with his hipes, John Harrington of Bewaldeth taking the 11½st and the Guinness Trophy for the best performance in all the wrestling, and cousin Richard Dixon felling Trevor Hodgson in the final of the 14 stones. Dixon who is tall, but weighs in at under 10½st, wrestled indifferently by his standards in the lighter weights, but showed his true mettle in the 14 stones against the bigger men.

Cockermouth Show with its crowded grassy ring continued the theme of excellent wrestling and big crowds. John Harrington scored a double to underline his return to form after a niggling injury, but the day there belonged to Carl Clark of Arlecdon who made a successful return to the ring after a work injury. True, he was massively bigger than his final opponent, John Harrington, but he knew that unless he used his power positively and made no mistakes, Harrington would trip him up, literally. That happened in the middle fall which was over before it had started when Harrington's sharp inside click trumped Clark's power and sat him on his backside. The final fall was close and tense but Clark got the final twist.

Flookburgh Steam Gathering had one of its best wrestling for some years amongst all the machinery. Graham Brocklebank took prizes in four categories. Joe Parsons, once a boy champion, made a successful and welcome return to the ring when he won the 11½stones. Joe Harrington had a double win and Thomas Brocklebank was unbeatable in the All Weights.

The furthest travelled and most successful wrestler over four days of wrestling was Jack Brown of Haydon Bridge. He is not the biggest of boys but he wrestled with great skill to win three Under 12 Years competitions and come second in the other. He and Ben Brocklebank are a perfect match, with Brocklebank beating him in the final at Ambleside, only to have that reversed at Flookburgh.

This Saturday sees a historic occasion as Rab McNamara seeks to beat Ted Dunglinson's record of nine Heavyweight World Championships at Powburn Show in Northumberland. Ted accumulated his nine over many years, whilst Rab has been unbeaten in the last nine years. On the evidence of his performance at the Centenary Challenge at the Cumberland Show, McNamara must be odds-on favourite to accomplish the task, but in Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling you never know what might happen.

Results:**Ambleside Sports**

Under 12 years: 1, B Brocklebank; 2, J Brown; 3, J Hodgson.

Under 15 Years: 1, A Ridley; 2, S Brocklebank; 3, J Campbell.

Under 18 Years: 1, Joe Harrington; 2, G Benson; 3, A Mason.

11½st: 1, John Harrington; 2, S Wilkinson; 3, G Brocklebank.

12½st: 1, R Fox; 2, John Harrington; 3, G Brocklebank.

14st: 1, R Dixon; 2, T Hodgson; 3, A Jones;

All Weights: 1, J Robson; 2, T Brocklebank; 3, R Dixon.

Guinness Trophy: John Harrington

Langholm Common Riding

Under 12 Years: 1, J Brown; 2, K Hodgson; 3, C Friel.

Under 16 Years: 1, F Healy; 2, A Ridley; 3, C Ridley.

12½st: 1, A Carlile; 2, R Fox; 3, John Harrington.

15st World Championship: 1, J Robson 2, J Davidson; 3, R Leiper.

All Weights: 1, J Robson; 2, J Davidson; 3, John Harrington

Cockermouth Show

Under 12 Years: 1, J Brown; 2, R Lister; 3, J Graves.

Under 15 Years: 1, A Ridley; 2, C Ridley; 3, D Ewart.

Under 18 Years: 1, P Housby; 2, D Walton; 3, J Graves

11½st: 1, John Harrington; 2, R Dixon; 3, A Carlile.

13½st: 1, John Harrington; 2, A Carlile; 3, R Dixon

All Weights: 1, C Clark; 2, John Harrington; R Dixon.

Flookburgh Steam gathering

Under 12 Years: 1, J Brown; 2, B Brocklebank; 3, D Hodgson.

Under 15 Years: 1, S Brocklebank; 2, J Hodgson; 3, Douglas Parsons.

Under 18 Years: 1, Joe Harrington; 2, G Brocklebank; 3, L Benn.

11½st: 1, J Parsons; 2, G Brocklebank; 3, S Brocklebank.

13st: 1, Joe Harrington; 2, G Brocklebank; 3, David Parsons.

All Weights: 1, T Brocklebank; 2, L Benn; 3, G Brocklebank.

Ladies: 1, T Hodgson; 2, G Hodgson-Stainton; 3, C Hodgson.

Dates:

Aug 5 (Sat)2pm Beetham Girls/U12/U14/U16/U18/12½/AW

2pmPowburn U10/U13/U16/11½/14/AW Ch'ship/Local Novice

Aug 6 (Sun)1pm Lowther U12/U15/U18/Ladies/12/14/AW (Costume requested)

Aug 8 (Tues) 1.30pm Kirkby Lonsdale U12/U15/U18/13/AW

Aug 10 (Thu) 3pm Ings U12/U15/U18/12½/AW (Costume requested)

Aug 12 (Sat) 12 noon Dalston Show U12/U15Ch'ship/U18/11½/13/AW

Aug 13 (Sun) Forestburngate includes U18yrs/10st Ch'ship

Aug 16 (Wed)Gosforth Boys

10th August 2006

RAB MCNAMARA OF EAST KILBRIDE

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

.....achieved one of his long-held ambitions when at Powburn Show he won the All Weights World Championship Cumberland and Westmorland Style for the tenth time in succession. In doing so he surpassed the seemingly unassailable record of Ted Dunglinson, who dominated heavyweight wrestling for two decades after the War.

At Powburn he faced a stern test in the first round against Darren Whitfield who moved the big Scot round the ring and had his chances until McNamara stopped a buttock and rushed him forward. That bout seemed to rouse him further and he disposed of Jason Davidson with his trade-mark hoist and twist. In the final he met an on-form Joseph Robson, but Robson too was swept away by two Big Mac Specials.

"...concentrated on speed work"

McNamara is 41 years old, stands six feet two inches tall and weighs in at 24 stones. (And he has an older brother who is taller and weighs in at thirty stones!) His physique is a significant part of his wrestling, but no-one should underestimate his skill and speed of reaction. At school he specialised in Putting-the-Shot and took up weight training, but he was also on the school Volleyball and Table-tennis teams. His athletic training concentrated on speed work and he also trained for Judo and Karate. He even trialled for an American Football team and played as a running back, and while living in Coventry played Rugby Union.

He did well in all these sports but in the end they did not satisfy him. Only when he took up freestyle wrestling and then our back-hold style did he find what he had been seeking all those years. Several of our wrestlers such as Darren Whitfield, Joe Threlfall, Mark Lowry and Jason Davidson would give him tough bouts but it was Alf Harrington who consistently was his hardest opponent until retirement.

Since the age of 18 he has worked as a doorman at week-ends, but he was also in the Scots Guards for three years before he left because of a damaged eye. He has mainly worked in the building trade for a family firm, specialising in sealing buildings. Whilst at home he is very much the family man with two young children.

Vintage wrestling

In a week of vintage wrestling many wrestlers put in excellent performances: Tracy Hodgson continued unbeaten in ladies wrestling winning at Lowther and Kirkby Lonsdale; Duncan Crazy Horse Hutton put in a rare appearance to win at Lowther as he did last year; Joe Harrington won the Under 18 Years at Kirkby Lonsdale and wrestled well in senior weights; Richard Dixon played his usual trick of reaching his peak in a higher weight after failing to win in a lighter one; and Jack Brown and Ben Brocklebank continued their personal duel where first one then the other takes the win.

But for me the best performance of the week came from Graham Brocklebank who started from a high level of achievement and got better and better. He peaked at Lowther when he won the Under 18 Years and went on to produce the performance of his life when he survived Richard Dixon's attacks and won with snappy counter attacks followed by a somersault, a spring to his feet and an easy vault over the ringside barriers to rejoin his family.

RESULTS:

Powburn

Under 10 Years: 1, H Oakley; 2, E Charlton; 3, G Robson.

Under 13 Years: 1, J Raine; 2, J Brown; 3, R Cuthbert.

Under 16 Years: 1, F Healy; 2, J Haile; 3, J Oliver.

11½st: 1, John Harrington; 2, R Wilkinson; 3, F Healy.

14st: 1, R Leiper; 2, John Harrington; 3, A Ord.

All Weights Championship: 1, R McNamara; 2, J Robson; 3, J Davidson.

Lowther

Under 12 Years: 1, B Brocklebank; 2, J Brown; 3, J Walton.

Under 15 Years: 1, A Ridley; 2, D Cleasby; 3, C Ridley.

Under 18 Years: 1, G Brocklebank; 2, Joe Harrington; 3, S Brocklebank.

Ladies Open: 1, T Hodgson; 2, G Hodgson-Stainton; 3, L Murray.

12st: 1, G Brocklebank; 2, R Dixon; 3, John Harrington.

14st: 1, R Dixon; 2, Joe Harrington; 3, A Jones.

All Weights: 1, D Hutton; 2, J Lowery; 3, J Robson.

Kirkby Lonsdale Show

Under 12 Years: 1, W Hayhurst; 2, J Brown; 3, B Brocklebank.

Under 15 Years: 1, S Brocklebank; 2, W Hayhurst; 3, Douglas Parsons.

Under 18 Years: 1, Joe Harrington; 2, T Mason; 3, G Brocklebank.

13st: 1, G Brocklebank; 2, Joe Harrington; 3, David Parsons.

All weights: 1, T Brocklebank; 2, G Brocklebank; 3, Joe Harrington.

Girls: 1, T Hodgson; 2, H Hodgson; 3, K Brown.

Dates:

Aug 12 (Sat) 11.45am Dalston Show - U12/U15Ch'ship/U18/11½/13/AW

Aug 13 (Sun) 2pm Forestburngate - U10/U13/U15/U18yrs, 10st Ch'ship/Novice/12½/15½/AW

Aug 16 (Wed) 2pm Gosforth - U13/U15/U18

Aug 19 (Sat) 12.30pm Allendale - U12/U15/U18/11½/13/AW -----4pm Skelton - U13/U16/U18/11½/13/AW-----
1.30pm Rusland

Aug 20 (Sun) 2.30pm Torver - Costume/Ladies/ U12/U15 /U18/11½/13/AW

31st August 2006

'MERCİ BEAUCOUPS, MES AMIS'

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

Eight Breton wrestlers, including a girl called Fred, have lit up the wrestling events over the busiest week-end of our season. All of them are excellent wrestlers in our style which is quite different to Gouren, their own jacket style of wrestling, and two of them, Tudy Le Meur and Mathieu Le Dour produced moments of brilliance which verged on the impossible.

Le Dour in the final of the All Weights at Bellingham particularly seemed able to lift and twist from any position. That form continued at Grasmere, and Keswick where he also won to oohs and aaahs from the crowd

Le Meur is a hanker, which means that several wrestlers thought they were winning as Le Meur fell backwards under them, only for him to disappear and swing up on top as the coiled spring that he calls a leg came into play. Once his hank is wrapped round an opponent's leg it is nearly impossible to remove, and when he sees his chance the chip is immediately in play.

Not only did the Bretons have great success over the week-end, but they also made our wrestlers raise their game. The common wisdom at Grasmere was that you must not play a waiting game with the Bretons, but go for your chips early and at full throttle. Andrew Carlile did just that and put in one of the finest displays of attacking wrestling you could hope to see. His method was to hipe, hipe and hipe again, and the result was two wins at Grasmere and the Guinness Cup for the best performance in six hours of dynamic wrestling. A thousand spectators encircled the ring on the tiered seating, and behind that they stood ten deep, all engrossed in the action.

Carlile's success continued at Silloth, where he won twice, and at Keswick where he won the lightweights but was felled by Le Dour in the final of the 13 stones. One of his hipes at Keswick was so enthusiastic that he not only launched his opponent into the air, but he also became airborne.

David Atkinson also knew how to deal with the Breton threat. He won the 13 stones at Grasmere in fine style despite being so short of competition as he returns to the ring after breaking his leg at Ambleside last year.

Rab McNamara doesn't do fancy footwork if he can help it, but he has no need for it when he is in the powerful form he showed in winning the All Weights at Grasmere, again. His well-rehearsed style shoots an opponent high into the air. For a brief moment the victim checks out the view, his legs flick sideways and the quick descent begins.

In a busy week-end my other unconnected memories are of Stuart Mason injured with a broken collar-bone (get well quickly); William Hayhurst keeping the two stars, Jack Brown and Ben Brocklebank at bay to win the Under 12s; Craig Ridley hanking opponents at Silloth and Keswick after observing how the Bretons did it; the marvellous fun at Bellingham with so many Novices giving their all; Fred (Frederique Nouvel) winning in style five times; two Grahams, Brocklebank and Benson, improving every time I see them; and that massive crowd circling the ring at Grasmere.

Results:

Holm Show, Newcastleton

Under 13 Years: 1, J Brown; 2, J Dickinson; 3, J Ovington.

Under 15 Years: 1, F Robb; 2, A Ridley; 3, L Miller.

Under 18 Years: 1, A Ord; 2, G Flux; 3, A Brough.

12½st: 1, John Harrington; 2, G Evenou; 3, A Fox.

All Weights: J-M Menesguer; 2, T Le Meur; 3, M Le Dour.

Ladies: 1, F Nouvel; 2, M Taylor.

Bellingham Show

Under 12 Years: 1, J Brown; 2, M Irving; 3, C Davidson.

Under 16 Years: 1, W Noimai; 2, D Crane; 3, A Ridley.

Novices: 1, T Le Meur; 2, G Evenou; 3, S Hamilton.

12st: 1, T Le Meur; 2, G Evenou; 3, S Hamilton.

14st: 1, G Evenou; 2, T Le Meur; 3, A Ord.

All Weights 1, M Le Dour; 2, R Leiper; 3, R Younger.

Ladies: 1, F Nouvel; 2, R Carson; 3, F Linsell.

Millom & Broughton Show

Under 12 Years: 1, B Brocklebank; 2, W Hayhurst; 3, J Hayhurst.

Under 15 Years Local: 1, S Brocklebank; 2, B Brocklebank; 3, T Barnes.

Under 16 Years: 1, S Brocklebank; 2, W Hayhurst; 3, T Barnes.

Under 18 Years 1, G Brocklebank; 2, R Cleasby; 3, S Brocklebank.

12st: 1, G Brocklebank; 2, P Cowell; 3, S Brocklebank.

All Weights: 1, R Lowery; 2, T Brocklebank; 3, J Lowery.

Grasmere Sports

Under 12 Years: 1, W Hayhurst; 2, B Brocklebank; 3, J Brown.

Under 15 Years: 1, A Ridley; 2, C Ridley; 3, J Lashley.

Under 18 Years: 1, G Brocklebank; 2, S Wilkinson; 3, G Benson.

11st: 1, A Carlile; 2, L Boucher; 3, J Pattinson;

12st: 1, A Carlile; 2, T Le Meur; 3, D Blair.

13st: 1, D Atkinson; 2, M Le Dour; 3, G Evenou.

14st 1, M Le Dour; 2, J Robson; 3, A Jones.

All Weights: 1, R McNamara; 2, J Hirsch; 3, T Brocklebank.

FEMALE WRESTLING

Under 15 Years: 1, K Brown; 2, L Jones; 3, H Hodgson.

Under 18 Years: 1, T Hodgson; 2, M Taylor; 3D Thompson.

10st: 1, F Nouvel; 2, B Ridley; 3, M Sharp.

All Weights: 1, T Hodgson; 2, D Thompson; 3, D Turley.

Silloth Carnival

Under 12 Years 1, J Brown; 2, J Johnston; 3, R Graham.

Under 15 Years 1, A Ridley; 2, C Ridley; 3, A Hird.

Under 18 Years 1, G Benson; 2, W Noimai; 3, A Ridley.

11½st 1, A Carlile; 2, G Benson; 3, P Barnes.

13st 1, A Carlile; 2, T Le Meur; 3, D Barnes.

All Weights 1, J-M Menesgou; 2, T Le Meur.

Ladies 1, F Nouvel; 2, T Hodgson; 3, D Thompson.

Keswick Show

Under 12 Years: 1, J Brown; 2, B Keeler; 3, G Reade.

Under 15 Years: 1, S Brocklebank; 2, C Ridley; 3, A Ridley.

Under 18 Years: 1, G Benson; 2, G Flaux; 3, B Farrow.

11½st: 1, A Carlile; 2, M Salaun; 3, T Strong.

13st: 1, M Le Dour; 2, A Carlile; 3, T Le Meur.

All Weights: 1, R Threlfall; 2, J-M Menesgou; 3, Z Swan

Ladies: 1, F Nouvel; 2, D Thompson; 3, H Hodgson.

Dates

Sept 1 (Fri) 7pm Rothbury Centenary Challenge Under 12 Years (£500 prize money), 13½st (£1000)

Sept 2 (Sat) 3.30 Hesketh Newmarket U15/U18/12½/12½

Sept 2 (Sat) 3pm Lowick U12/U15/U18/12½/AW

Sept 2 (Sat) Harbottle

Sept 3 (Sun) 1.45pm Wolsingham U12/U15/U18/11/12/14/AW/Ladies

Sept 3 (Sun) Loweswater

Sept 7 (Thu) 3pm Grayrigg U12/U15/U18/11½/13/15/AW

Sept 10 (Sun) 12noon Stanhope U12/U15/U18/11½/13/AW

Sept 10 (Sun) 3.30pm Whitfield U12/U15/U18/12½/AW

Sept 14 (Thu) 2pm Westmorland Girls U14/Ladies/ U12/U15/ U18Centenary Challenge(£500)/ 11½CC(£1000)/ 12/13/13/ 14st Ch'ship/AW

Sept 16 (Sat) Egremont 13st Ch'ship

Sept 17 (Sun) 2pm Borrowdale U12/U15/U18/11½/13/AW

11th September 2006

FRIDAY NIGHT AT ROTHBURY MART

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

.....was a time for superlatives. Even the veterans of the Post-War wrestling boom and the hey day of the Academy League agreed that this was the best night of indoor wrestling they had ever witnessed. A crowd of 400 filled every tiered seat in the Mart Hall. The wrestlers had travelled from Lancashire, West Cumbria, Glasgow, Dundee and Brittany. Twenty-five of them, all genuine contenders, entered for the 13½st Centenary Challenge with its £500 first prize. Skill, tension and decibels were in abundance.

Many thought that the Breton, Mathieu Le Dour, was the favourite to lift the head prize, but he met the only man he feared, David Atkinson in the second round and lost after a high octane display of attack and counter attack. That effort drained Atkinson so that he went out in the next round after a lot of stopping and starting with a hyped-up Richard Fox who looked unstoppable for a time, but went down to the clinical expertise and fitness of Andrew Carlile in the semi-final.

That left Carlile to face David Barnes of Dearham in the final. Barnes is only an occasional wrestler, but has a solid background of coaching from Tom Harrington and Alan Jones at Carlisle Wrestling Club before he moved down West. Indeed, one of Barnes' biggest challenges, after felling Andrew Fox and Graham Brocklebank, came from his former coach, Alan Jones, in the third round. And the hank which left Jones lying horizontal and felled whilst still two feet above the mat was for me the best fall of the night. Afterwards he confided that this was the first time he had felled Jones.

In the semi-final he proved better than most at dealing with a hanking Breton, on this occasion Gwendal Evenou, and that set up for the biggest bout of his life.

As the two wrestlers entered the ring Barnes obviously had a significant weight and height advantage, but Carlile is the on-form wrestler this year and full of match fitness so the contest seemed finely balanced. For the first fall Barnes used the height asset and hiped Carlile. Then he finished the matter in the second fall with a most unlikely chip for such a big lad, the same hank that had cut through Alan Jones's defences earlier. Barnes is a cheerful character but his grin has never been wider than when he received his medal, tankard and little brown envelope..it beats stacking shelves on the night-shift at Sainsburys.

Earlier in the evening the Under 12 Years Centenary Challenge provided a tasty first course for this feast of wrestling. The two most prolific winners in this age group, Ben Brocklebank and Jack Brown, met in the second round, with Brocklebank winning with his strong grip and twists. All that remained then was for Brocklebank to prevail against two local wrestlers, Robert Cuthbert in the semi-final and Joe Ferguson in the final. They were tough opposition but much less experienced than the victorious Brocklebank

In another big entry Adam and Craig Ridley proved with their silky skills why the Ridley family has monopolised the Under 15 Years Championships. At Under 18 Years Graham Brocklebank, Ben's older brother, won from an entry of 24. In the 11½ stons Andrew Carlile accounted for several Bretons, and Rab Clark. Robert Leiper was in command throughout and the same can be said of Rab McNamara in the All Weights. His final with Darren Whitfield was no walk over but there were no moments of weakness to give Whitfield, or the enthusiastic crowd, any hope.

The sight of the ice-cream van being towed out of the Harbottle Show field as I arrived along flooded roads, set the tone for the other events of the week-end. Both Harbottle and Heskett Newmarket suffered badly because of the weather but went ahead nevertheless. Wolsingham and Loweswater Show had better weather, but not the best of entries after so much travelling and exertion by wrestlers in the past fortnight.

The Bretons made the best they could of Harbottle by buying team umbrellas, wrestling as well as they could in the conditions and after the night before, and won the Tug-o'-War, before setting off through the night for the Plymouth Ferry. A bientot.

Results:

Ennerdale

Under 12 Years: 1, J Brown; 2, D Fearon; 3, A Chapman.

Under 15 Years: 1, A Ridley; 2, C Ridley; 3, C O'Fee.

Under 18 Years: 1, J Graves; 2, G Flaux; 3, W Noimai.

Ladies Open 1, F Nouvel; 2, K Brown; 3, L Murray.

12½st: 1, M Salaun; 2, T Le Meur; 3, R Roberts.

All Weights: 1, C Clark 2, J-M Menezgou; 3, T Le Meur.

Rothbury

Under 12 Years Centenary Challenge: 1, B Brocklebank; 2, J Ferguson; 3, R Cuthbert.

Under 15 Years: 1, A Ridley; 2, C Ridley; 3, D Crane.

Under 18 Years: 1, G Brocklebank; 2, J Oliver; 3, A Ord.

11½st: 1, A Carlile; 2, T Le Meur; 3, R Clark.

13½st Centenary Challenge: 1, D Barnes; 2, A Carlile; 3, G Evenou.

15½st: 1, R Leiper; 2, G Evenou; 3, J Davidson.

All Weights: 1, R McNamara; 2, D Whitfield; 3, R Younger.

Heskett Newmarket

Under 12 Years: 1, J Brown; 2, B Wilde; 3, T Teile.

Under 15 Years: 1, J Brown; 2, T Teile; 3, D Millar.

Under 18 Years: 1, S Foster; 2, W Noimai; 3, J Brown.

12½st: 1, A Fox; 2, S Foster; 3, C Grant.

Loweswater

Under 12 Years: 1, O Thompson; 2, B Graves; 3, A Hughes.

Under 15 Years: 1, W Nixon; 2, C O'Fee; 3, P Murray.

Under 18 Years: 1, Joe Harrington; 2, J Ewart; 3, N Townsend.

12½st: 1, Joe Harrington; 2, M Hayton; 3, D Millar.

All Weights: 1, C Clark; 2, Joe Harrington; 3, A Pace.

Ladies Open: 1, L Murray; 2, T Clark; 3, L Askew

Wolsingham

Under 12 Years: 1, J Brown; 2, S Campbell.

Under 15 Years: 1, A Ridley; 2, J Hale; 3, C Ridley.

Under 18 Years: 1, A Ridley; 2, J Hodgson; 3, J Hale.

11st: 1, K Ridley; 2, J Hodgson; 3, A Ridley.

12st: 1, K Ridley; 2, J Hale; 3, J Hodgson.

14st: 1, A Jones; 2, A Ridley; 3, C Ridley;

All Weights: 1, R Leiper; 2, K Younger; 3, J Davidson.

Ladies Open: 1, T Hodgson; 2, K Brown; 3, H Kennedy.

Dates:

Sept 10 (Sun) 12noon Stanhope U12/U15/U18/11½/13/AW

Sept 14 (Thu) 2pm Westmorland Girls U14/ Ladies/ U12/U15/ U18Centenary Challenge(£500) /11½CC(£1000) /12/13/13/ 14st Ch'ship/AW

Sept 16 (Sat) Egremont 13st Ch'ship

Sept 17 (Sun) 2pmBorrowdale U12/U15/U18/11½/13/AW

14th September 2006

AFTER THE BIG PRIZE, MAJOR EXCITEMENTS.....

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

.....of Grasmere and the Rothbury Centenary Challenges, wrestling reverted to its basic fare this week with smaller events at Grayrigg and Stanhope Shows. Nevertheless, youth, good wrestling and responsive crowds were the common themes. And, of course the ambience of each event provided its own pleasure.

Alf Harrington travelled from Kirkbampton, on the edge of the Solway, to Stanhope, deep in Weardale, to organise the wrestling there. His expectations were not high as few wrestlers had indicated that they would be competing, but when he arrived he was delighted to find two car-loads of wrestlers from Rothbury, two lots of Carlisle Wrestling Club regulars and the usual bus-load of Hodgsons from Dentdale. The wrestling ring was in a corner of the main ring which attracted a good crowd. As an interlude half way through the wrestling the Shetland Pony Grand National thundered round nearby, and at the conclusion of the wrestling he witnessed the biggest gathering of heavy horses he had ever seen.

The wrestling was excellent, but lacking many senior wrestlers, so it was open to the youngsters to carry the day. Jack Brown shone as he often does in the Under 12 Years. Fin Healy, who has missed a few events recently, returned three inches taller, stronger and sharper so that Adam Ridley, clever though he is, had no answer in the Under 15 Years final. James Oliver of Rothbury dominated the Under 18s with his back-heels and twists. Ross Wilkinson, also of Rothbury, the winner of the 11½ stones, had the best fall of the day when he hit his opponent's top trouser pocket with a cross-buttock which whirled him over to the ground in spectacular style. Tracy Hodgson won the girls' wrestling, but only after a mammoth struggle with Donna Thompson who is closing the gap each time they meet. Joe Brown was too strong for the younger generation in the 13 stones. And the winner of the All Weights, Rothbury coach Darren Whitfield, could have beaten all his opponents at will, but chose to give them a try out first so that he was coaching while winning.

Grayrigg also relied on youth as there was no wrestler over the age of eighteen. This allowed Graham Brocklebank to accumulate numerous wins for he was the dominant wrestler. Time and again he grabbed, hiped and somersaulted his way to first place. He lost only one fall when Graham Benson took him for a ride on a swinging inside-hipe, but he reasserted himself immediately.

The biggest gathering of wrestlers during the week took place at Wyndham School, Egremont, when 28 fit lads turned up for a wrestling session on the mats in the week leading up to Egremont Crab Fair. The PE teacher, Alex Price, had firstly watched and then taken part in wrestling at some of the West Cumbrian events. Enthused by the experience, he canvassed opinion amongst the boys at school and received such an enthusiastic response that he arranged for me to take a training session backed up by the Centenary Challenge winner David Barnes, who lives at Dearham. There is now a real possibility of further regular sessions with David Barnes passing on his skills now that he is the latest wrestler to qualify for the CWWA Basic Coaching Certificate.

Results:

Grayrigg Show

Under 12 Years: 1, B Brocklebank; 2, J Brown; 3, B Thompson.

Under 15 Years: 1, S Brocklebank; 2, W Hayhurst; 3, J Hodgson.

Under 18 Years: 1, G Brocklebank; 2, G Benson; 3, D Bland.

Girls: 1, H Hodgson; 2, C Hodgson.

11½st: 1, G Brocklebank; 2, T Bland; 3, G Benson.

13st: 1, G Brocklebank; 2, T Bland; 3, G Benson.

15st: 1, G Brocklebank; 2, G Benson; 3, J Hodgson.

All Weights: 1, G Brocklebank; 2, G Benson; 3, J Hodgson.

Stanhope Show

Under 12 Years: 1, J Brown; 2, C Iley; 3, C Whitfield.

Under 15 Years: 1, F Healy; 2, A Ridley; 3, J Hale.

Under 18 Years: 1, J Oliver; 2, J Hale; 3, A Ridley.

11½st: 1, R Wilkinson; 2, J Hale; 3, F Healy.

13st: 1, Joe Brown; 2, W Noimai; 3, F Healy.

All Weights: 1, D Whitfield; 2, J Oliver; 3, F Healy.

Girls: 1, T Hodgson; 2, D Thompson; 3, C Hodgson.

Dates

16 (Sat) 2pm Egremont U12/U15/U18/11½/13st Ch'ship/AW

17 (Sun) 2pm Borrowdale U12/U15/U18/11½/13/AW

Borrowdale Lakeland Country Fair on Sunday strongly supports the traditional wrestling strip. They have given

good prize-money for the Costume Competition and urge all regular wrestlers to turn out in the traditional strip.

23 (Sat) 12 noon Langholm Show U18yrs Ch'ship

20th September 2006

THE WRESTLING AT THE WESTMORLAND SHOW

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

..... could have been a washout as the rain reached comical proportions and just kept going, with the occasional long brattle of thunder thrown in, but a dense crowd gathered under brollies to watch competitions of the highest quality and intensity.

More than £2,500 of prize-money, two Centenary Challenges and the 14st Championship kept wrestlers focused and the crowd enthralled.

Entered for the Under 18 Years Centenary Challenge were 21 lads and each round raised the level of skill and tension until the two best wrestlers, Graham Brocklebank and Joe Harrington, met in the final. Harrington's best chip is the inside-hipe and he set about loading Brocklebank onto it. Brocklebank fought hard but in the end he was lifted up and round on the hipe and dumped into the mire, twice.

Last month the Breton wrestlers gave the Cumbrians plenty of practice in defending against the hank, but they were unable to deal with Rab Clark's version. He is a rare visitor to our competitions now, but he returned on top form to win the 11½st Centenary Challenge. His final opponent, Jonjo Pattinson turned in one of his best performances to date on the treacherous surface.

Sodden long-johns may have felled the 14st Champion, Joe Robson, before he even started, for he was not weighed out by much. Four Carlisle Wrestling Club wrestlers contested the semi-final. In the end David Atkinson prevailed in the final against Richard Fox. Fox took the middle fall when he trapped both of Atkinson's legs as he over-reached himself in trying to engage his trademark hipe. For the decider, though, it was business as usual as the hipe worked as smoothly as a well-oiled machine.

A year ago Atkinson was in plaster after breaking his leg at Ambleside. The 14st Championship win confirms his return to the highest standards of wrestling. At present he is studying Law at Newcastle University, and has been invited to help with the coaching at the new Rothbury Academy this winter.

John Harrington was awarded the trophy for the best performance at the Westmorland Show for the quality of some of his falls, but in many ways that was only a beginning to a remarkable week-end when he surged back to the sort of form which put him ahead of everyone last year. Earlier in the season he had handed over championship trophies to Andrew Carlile, but at last at Egremont Crab Fair he laid his hands on one again when he felled Richard Fox in the final of the 13st Championship. Fox struck first with a surprise hipe, but Harrington came back with an outside-hipe to set up one of those nerve-jangling encounters for the decider. This time there was no neat finish as the two wrestlers lay out almost horizontally trying to find the last ounce of power and purchase. Harrington was the man to do it and he went home with four cups, including the Guinness Trophy, to mark his success.

At Borrowdale, the following day, he was unbeaten all afternoon, winning all three weights, while Jack Lashley of the Milnthorpe Academy had his best day yet with a double win in the boys' wrestling.

Results:

Westmorland County Show

Under 12 Years: 1, W Hayhurst; 2, B Brocklebank; 3, D Hodgson.

Under 15 Years: 1, F Healy; 2, S Brocklebank; 3, C Ridley.

Under 18 Years Centenary Challenge: 1, Joe Harrington; 2, G Brocklebank; 3, G Benson.

11½st Centenary Challenge: 1, R Clark; 2, J Pattinson; 3, G Benson.

12st: 1, John Harrington; 2, R Fox; 3, G Benson.

13st: 1, R Fox; 2, D Atkinson; 3, A Carlile.

14st Championship: 1, D Atkinson; 2, R Fox; 3, John Harrington.

All Weights: 1, D Whitfield; 2, J Robson; 3, T Brocklebank.

Girls Under 14: 1, K Brown; 2, C Hodgson; 3, H Hodgson.

Ladies Open: 1, T Hodgson; 2, K Brown; 3, D Thompson.

Egremont Crab Fair

Under 12 Years: 1, J Brown; 2, R Lister; 3, B Wright.

Under 15 Years: 1, J Brown; 2, P Murray; 3, R Woodburn.

Under 18 Years: 1, Joe Harrington; 2, K Naylor; 3, W Noimai.

11½st: 1, A Carlile; 2, W Noimai; 3,

13st Championship: 1, John Harrington; 2, R Fox; 3, D Barnes.

All Weights: 1, D Barnes; 2, D Atkinson; 3, R Fox.

Borrowdale

Under 12 Years: 1, J Brown; 2, L Thompson; 3, T Osborne.

Under 15 Years: 1, J Lashley; 2, C Ridley; 3, J Brown.

Under 18 Years: 1, J Lashley; 2, J Ewart; 3, R Cardwell.

11½st: 1 John Harrington; 2, J Lashley; 3, C Ridley.

13st: 1, John Harrington; 2, R Fox; 3, A Price.

All Weights: 1, John Harrington; 2, R Fox; 3, A Price.

Dates:

23 (Sat) 12 noon Langholm Show U12/U15/U18yrs Ch'ship/12½/AW

30 (Sat) 3pm Eskdale U15/U18/10½/12/AW

28th September 2006

TEXT

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

Young contenders for the Under 18 Years Championship.....

.....travelled over the Border to Langholm Show from all over the Northern Counties; from Lancashire and the Central Lake District to Rothbury in Northumberland; from the Solway Coast in the west to Tynemouth on the North East Coast.

However, it would seem a short journey home for the new champion, Graham Brocklebank of Warton, who won the championship 36 years after his father Harry put his name on the cup.

In the first round Brocklebank felled one of the new breed of Northumbrians, James Oliver, who has been doing well in his first season since the Rothbury Academy opened. A back-heel and a hipe finished that job off. In the semi-final he showed his versatility by inside-clicking Graeme Benson of Langdale for the first fall. He then took the second with a back-heel which merely put Benson off balance, but Brocklebank followed up so persistently that Benson never regain his balance.

This set up the final between the two favourites Brocklebank who had won at Grasmere and Joe Harrington fresh from his big win, the Under 18 Centenary Challenge, at the Westmorland Show.

Harrington's main weapon is the hipe, and a hard developed as he tried to gain the right position and Brocklebank fought him off. Eventually Harrington got to where he wanted and Brocklebank flew up in the air to be turned and dumped on his back. The second fall looked to be going the same way with Brocklebank high in the air, but this time he was not conclusively turned, gained a toe-hold on solid ground and buttocked Harrington for a close fall.

Tension was high for the decider. Harrington's confidence seemed dented by the failed hipe in the previous round and Brocklebank took the initiative. He lifted Harrington on a hipe and then twisted back to win. All the years of training and travelling were suddenly worthwhile.

The youngest Brocklebank, Ben, beat his close rival, Jack Brown, in the final of the Under 12 Years. Cousin Tracy Hodgson felled Katy Brown in the Ladies final. And Fin Healy of Tynemouth easily won the Under 15 Years. Apart from that it was the John Harrington Show. He won the 12½ stones in grand style and flowed on through the All Weights till the final, when he was made to work particularly hard over four holds by the disappointed Joe Harrington. Their first was a dog-fall, then John won with a rush off the right side. Joe then equalised with his faithful inside-hipe before John finished off Joe and a good day's wrestling with an outside-hipe.

The Annual General Meeting of Carlisle Wrestling Club will be held in Currock House on Friday 6th October at 8pm. All those interested in furthering wrestling in the area are invited to attend.

Results:

Langholm Show

Under 12 Years: 1, B Brocklebank; 2, J Brown; 3, S Banden

Under 15 Years: 1, F Healy; 2, J Brown; 3, B Brocklebank.

Under 18 Years Championship: 1, G Brocklebank; 2, Joe Harrington; 3, G Benson.

12½st: 1, John Harrington; 2, G Benson; 3, F Healy.

All Weights: 1, John Harrington; 2, Joe Harrington; 3, G Brocklebank.

Ladies Open: 1, T Hodgson; 2, K Brown; 3, C Hodgson.

Dates:

Sept 30 (Sat) 3pm Eskdale U15/U18/10½/12/AW

Oct 6th (Fri) 8 pm Carlisle Wrestling Club AGM, Currock House

Oct 7 (Sat) 2pm Yetholm U9/U13/U16/U18/11½/14½/AW

5th October 2006

FOR MANY YEARS

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

mature, masterful wrestlers such as Tom Harrington, Alan Jones, Alan Walton and Alf Harrington dominated Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling.

While we may bemoan the lack of numbers of senior wrestlers at present, the sport is by no means in the doldrums for there is a new wave of young wrestlers filling the vacuum.

At Eskdale Show there was probably one wrestler over the age of 21 yet there was excellent sport for an hour and a half.

The competitors in the main were not far-travelled wrestlers, but they were not just coming out of the crowd for a laugh.

The Academy at Waberthwaite has produced young wrestlers scarcely known in other areas, but full of skill and action. The 10½ stons was where the local lads flourished most and was won by Ashley Killip in a final with Josh Graves.

Two regular wrestlers, however, were ahead of the local field. Scott Brocklebank is a big lad for twelve, but he does not just rely on power.

Week by week his technique improves so that he was a stylish winner in the Under 15s and the Under 18s. Previously he would rely on hold and twists; now he is hiping for clean falls. His hardest bouts came against Jack Ewart in the semi-final of the Under 18s when Ewart took the first fall with a cross-click. Brocklebank struck back with a rush off the right hip to set up a tense decider.

Once more Ewart turned in and tried to buttock but Brocklebank weathered the storm. Ewart then went for the cross-click which had worked for him in a similar position in their first hold, but Brocklebank had obviously been making notes for he stepped smartly over the chip and twisted Ewart down to the grass.

John Harrington has been winning prolifically in the second half of the season, and he continued doing so at Eskdale. Magisterial is not a word worn out by over-use, but that was what came to mind when I reflected on Harrington's performance for he was the Master Artist, the man who set the standards.

Even when he unexpectedly lost a fall to Egremont schoolteacher, Alex Price in the All Weights semi-final, you just knew that he would turn the heat up a bit in the next hold and so he did.

The first prize for keenness had to go to Jack Brown and his father, Joe, who travelled all the way to Eskdale from Haydon Bridge in Northumberland. They knew when they set out that there was no Under 12's for Jack, but they set out anyway. Sadly they turned off one valley too soon and found themselves in Wasdale, so they were late even for the Under 15's and thus his first bout of the day was with a large lad in the Under 18's. Although vastly over-weighted Brown used all his considerable skills to take an excellent middle fall before being obliterated in the decider.

The final arrangements are coming together for the European Espoirs Championships to be held at Lime House School in the last week of October.

Teams are expected from Brittany, Leon in Northern Spain, Scotland, Austria, The Netherlands and our own English team. Andrew Carlile and David Atkinson are coaching an excellent home team with a real chance of winning the trophy.

At the end of that momentous week, on Friday 27th October, a special Centenary Dinner for the Wrestling Association will be held at the Shepherds Inn, Rosehill, Carlisle. Anyone wanting tickets should contact Alf Harrington or myself (016974 73559)

Carlisle Wrestling Club will be in action soon. The academy's Annual General Meeting will be held tonight at Currock House, Carlisle. (8pm). Anyone with an interest in our traditional wrestling style is invited to attend.

Results:

Eskdale Show

Under 15 Years: 1, S Brocklebank; 2, S Denwood; 3, T Jennings.

Under 18 Years: 1, S Brocklebank; 2, A Killip; 3, J Ewart.

10½st: 1, A Killip; 2, J Graves; 3, C Naylor.

12st: 1, John Harrington; 2, C Naylor; 3, R Benn.

All Weights: 1, John Harrington; 2, P Wake; 3, A Price.

Dates:

Oct 6th (Fri) 8 pm Carlisle Wrestling Club AGM, Currock House

Oct 7 (Sat) 2pm Yetholm U9/U13/U16/U18/11½/14½/AW

Oct 14 (Sat) 2pm Alwinton Show U10/U13/U15/U21/11½/14/AW

4pm Wasdale Head U11/U12/U13/U15/U18/10½/12/AW

12th October 2006**WRESTLING.....**

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

still has a few spectacular flourishes before the last bouts of the Grass Season at Buttermere on the last Saturday of October, but the indoor action has already started. Carlisle Wrestling Club's training programme will provide weekly sessions each Wednesday until April 2007, with coaches like Alan Jones, Tom Harrington and triple champion Andrew Carlile in charge.

The end of season flourishes include simultaneous events a hundred miles apart in two of the most beautiful settings: Alwinton Show in the Cheviot Hills and Wasdale Head Show in deepest lake District; the European Youth Championships of the International Federation of Celtic Wrestling at Lime House School; and a Grand Presentation Dinner to celebrate the Centenary of the Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling Association.

Several of the Carlisle Club's wrestlers, Richard Dixon, Richard Fox, Joe and John Harrington and Josh Desborough, will be part of the English team for the European Espoirs Championships to be held in Lime House School Sports Hall on the 25th and 26th October. Andrew Carlile has been taking regular coaching sessions in Gouren, the highly technical Breton style of wrestling. Meanwhile the other Gouren expert, David Atkinson, who is reading Law at Newcastle University, has been travelling up to the new Rothbury Academy to train the heavyweight, Richard Younger, in the cunning arts of Gouren.

While he was there he also slotted into the Northumbrian coaching team to put the older lads through their paces. Andrew Ord at Yetholm Show attested to the exhausting rigour of the visiting coach.

The wrestling of the week was at Yetholm Show on the fringes of our traditional area. Its position, just a few miles into Scotland. Made it an ideal site to bring together the English and the Scots. Mick Phillips brought a load of lads and men from Dundee, and Rothbury Academy was there in force. Of the latter, Jack Hale and Andrew Ord did particularly well to keep the Scots at bay, but the Scots hit back with wins for Mick Phillips in the 11½ stones and John Hirsch with a powerful, assured performance in winning the 14½ stones.

With the All Weights the momentum swung back to the Northumbrians with Rothbury coach, Darren Whitfield, controlling the power of John Hirsch in the final.

Best of all, though, was the start of the wrestling when a rare Under 9 Years had a good entry and lots of good wrestling. Luckily there were no precocious monsters in the entry so all the bouts were settled by good instinctive wrestling, rather than pure strength. Then in the Under 13 Years Jack Brown stood out from the crowd not only by being the only wrestler immaculately turned out in the traditional strip, but also by a demonstration of top-class, technical wrestling which cut a swathe through heavier and older opponents.

And where did he learn to wrestle like that? Carlisle Wrestling Club, of course.

Results:**Yetholm Border Shepherds Show**

Under 9 Years: 1, C Woodburn; 2, Harvey; 3, C Whitfield.

Under 13 Years: 1, J Brown; 2, J Reid; 3, J Watson.

Under 16 Years: 1, J Hale; 2, J Brown; 3, J Reid.

Under 18 Years: 1, A Ord; 2, R Wilkinson; 3, D Blair.

11½st: 1, M Phillips 1, R Wilkinson; 2, D Blair.

14½st: 1, J Hirsch; 2, A Ord; 3, D Blair.

All Weights: 1, D Whitfield; 2, J Hirsch; 3, T Fox.

Dates:

Oct 14 (Sat) 2pm Alwinton Show U10/U13/U15/U21/11½/14/AW

4pm Wasdale Head U11/U12/U13/U15/U18/10½/12/AW

25 (Wed) European Espoirs Championships at Lime House School, Dalston

1.30pm Opening Ceremony

2pm Gouren and Backhold wrestling

5pm

26 (Thur) European Espoirs Championships

10.30am Gouren (68kg, 74kg Pools)

5pm C&W Wrestling (Pools)

6pm Finals

October 27th (Fri) 7.30pm CWWA Centenary Dinner, Shepherd's Inn, Carlisle

(Tickets from Alf Harrington or Roger Robson tel: 01697473559)

28 (Sat) Buttermere Show

October 12th 2006

26th October 2006

GLORIOUS SCENERY IS NOT COMPULSORY.....

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

.....as a backdrop to Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling, but it is often there, and nowhere more spectacularly than at the simultaneous events, Alwinton Show in the Cheviot Hills and Wasdale Head Show a hundred miles away embedded amongst the highest mountains in the Lake District.

A huge throng of people gathered round the rings at both events. Alwinton has the biggest wrestling ring of the lot, and most of the 5000 people attending the event were massed around to watch the action.

Eight tiny lads set the ball rolling and set the crowd cheering when they fought for the Under 10 Years crown. Joe Hale felled Tom Wade in the final and won the main prize, but there were well-deserved medals for everyone who took part.

Brother and sister, Joe and Donna Thompson, each won tough events. Joe started badly in the final of the Under 13s when he broke his hold while trying to cope with the much bigger James Raine but then he got into gear and took the next two falls with good footwork and twisting. All the entrants for the Girls event were trained wrestlers, which is a good sign of the times, and that made it all the more satisfying, for Donna to come top of the pile.

So big was the wrestling entry that Sudden Death single falls came into play so that the wrestling could finish before dark, so there was an extra edge to the bouts as Richard Younger took the Under 21 Years trophy.

For a time then the crowd was entertained by a double act called Carlile and Harrington. In a large entry Andrew Carlile and John Harrington twice wrestled their way to a final. In the 11½ stons Harrington gained first blood by countering Carlile's buttocking attempt and seemed in full control of the situation.

In the 14 stons final you might have expected more of the same, but Carlile had obviously been thinking and focusing all his power and skill for he was in command. He won the first fall with a sneaky little backover twist that catches so many wrestlers out at the beginning of a bout. After a dog-fall for the second hold, he exploded into action in the third with a swinging inside hipe that had no answer.

In the All weights, which reverted to best-of-three falls, the local Heavyweight, Darren Whitfield, carefully picked his way through the rounds. The early part of each bout would be a softening up process, and then when the moment was right he struck with a killer blow. In the final David Atkinson strove manfully to find a way to move the big man, but Whitfield was too experienced to be dealt a sucker blow, weathered the storm and then won with a leg-up buttock.

Wasdale Head was a happy hunting ground for the extended Brocklebank family. Ben won the Under 12s; half-cousin Scott went one better by winning both the Under 13s and Under 15; finally, Graham looked as if he would walk of with three wins, but at the very last young Luke Benn of Wabertwaite Academy pulled out all the stops to win the last bouts of the day.

Results:

Alwinton Show

Under 10 Years 1, J Hale; 2, T Wade; 3, C Mason.

Under 13 Years 1, J Thompson; 2, J Raine; 3, J Loughborough.

Under 15 Years 1, F Healy; 2, D Crane; 3, L Davison.

Girls Under 17 Years 1, D Thompson; 2, K Brown; 3, L Jones.

Under 21 Years 1, R Younger; 2, John Harrington; 3, J Hale.

11½st 1, John Harrington; 2, A Carlile; 3, R Parsons.

14st 1, A Carlile; 2, John Harrington; 3, A Ord.

All Weights 1, D Whitfield; 2, D Atkinson; 3, K Younger.

Wasdale Head

Under 11 Years 1, M Hodgson; 2, A Newell; 3, J Porter.

Under 12 Years 1, B Brocklebank; 2, A Newell; 3, T Porter.

Under 13 Years 1, S Brocklebank; 2, P Murray; 3, B Brocklebank.

Under 15 Years 1, S Brocklebank; 2, B Mahovic; 3, P Murray.

Under 18 Years 1, G Brocklebank 2, S Brocklebank; 3, A Porter.

10½st 1 B Mahovic; 2, A Porter; 3, B Brocklebank.

12st 1, G Brocklebank; 2, A Porter; 3, J Taylor

All Weights 1, L Benn; 2, G Brocklebank; 3, A Price.

Dates:

25 (Wed) (NB No Carlisle Wrestling Club tonight)

European Espoirs Championships at Lime House School, Dalston

1.30pm Opening Ceremony

2pm Gouren and Backhold wrestling

5pm

26 (Thur) European Espoirs Championships

10.30am Gouren (68kg, 74kg Pools)

5pm C&W Wrestling (Pools)

6pm Finals

27 (Fri) 7.30pm CWWA Centenary Dinner, Shepherd's Inn, Carlisle

(Tickets from Alf Harrington or Roger Robson

tel: 01697473559)

28 (Sat) Buttermere Show

1st November 2006

THE CONTRASTS COULD HARDLY BE GREATER:

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

after a week of intense international wrestling, culminating in a Centenary Dinner which brought together 250 wrestling aficionados, old and young, it was back to the homely fare of Buttermere Show on a sodden hillside on the Saturday.

The European Espoirs Championships at Lime House School, Dalston were a major achievement for the Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling Association bringing together four closely balanced teams from Austria, England, Brittany and Spain. Scotland was there, too, but with only a single representative they were scarcely going to figure in the Team Championship. The bouts were so close throughout the competition that any team could have come out on top.

The Cumbrian's chances of winning, however, took a severe drop when Richard Younger sustained a sprained ankle on the first day when he was within 20 seconds of reaching the final of the Heavyweight Gouren section. That injury meant that on the second day, instead of winning maximum points in his own style of wrestling, he did not score at all.

All the Cumbrians wrestled their hearts out. The two youngest wrestlers Tom Mason of Milnthorpe and Josh Desborough of Carlisle found the opposition too strong for them, so had to be content with some good falls in the backhold wrestling to inspire them for the next championships in two years time. Mason was completely exhausted by the end of the first day, battered and bruised, but he still managed to win good falls with his subtle wrestling on the second day. Richard Dixon, though injured and away from the wrestling ring for many weeks before the event, showed enough of his ability to indicate what a force he would have been if fully fit.

Joe Harrington in the 90kg class had a long day of backhold wrestling. Three wrestlers took an age to sort themselves out: Harrington could fell the Leonese wrestler, who in turn could fell the Austrian wrestler, who in turn could fell Harrington. This pattern went on and on, firstly best-of-five, then an extra round of best-of-three and finally several rounds of sudden death. At last the pattern changed when both Harrington and the Leonese wrestler felled the Austrian, so that a result was at last possible. Unfortunately, despite the cheering and his previous success against the Spaniard Harrington lost the bout and ended up in second place.

Richard Fox had given an excellent account of himself in the Gouren style on the first day and went one better on the second when he won the European title in the backhold style in a closely balanced final against the Breton Sylvain Corvez. He won his share of falls with his favourite chip, the buttock, but the surprise element is always there with the foreign wrestlers, so very often it came down to quick fire response to whatever is happening.

Best performance of all came from John Harrington who performed so well in the 74kg class of the Backhold wrestling that he was unanimously voted the best wrestler in that style by the four other teams. The second day of wrestling when he changed over to Gouren began well too with some skilful and dominant wrestling. All went well until the final when he was well beaten over the five minute round.

After all the points were counted two teams, the Austrians and the Bretons were equal. A further count back meant that the Austrians flew back home with the heavy wooden shield which is the team trophy for the event. The Leonese were third and we were a close fourth.

Meanwhile at Buttermere, as the rain added more mud to the morass masquerading as a showfield, only the Herdwicks and their shepherds turned up in force; presumably on the basis that it seemed a fairly normal day to them. The hound trails were cancelled and the fell runners spent most of the race in dense cloud. Certainly the wrestling was affected badly with few wrestling and few watching. However it was good to see Dan Robson struggling manfully against a bigger lad in the final of the Under 12 Years so that he was awarded the cup for the best performance. Tom Barnes, a product of the wrestling course at Grasmere School earlier this year showed that he had been paying attention to Messrs Jones and Carlile when he won the Under 15 Years. Luke Benn, mature beyond his years, was an easy winner of the Under 18s. Alex Price, a PE teacher at Wyndham School, won his first Senior event, and it was good to see Robert Lowery of Millom returning to the ring to win the All Weights.

The closest fought bout of the day, however, was between Emily and Jenny (no surnames given), with dispensation to wrestle in their wellies, one in pink and the other in red. A good muddy day was had by all.

Results:

Buttermere Show

Under 12 Years 1, J Bland; 2, D Robson; 3, H Barnes.

Under 15 Years 1, T Barnes; 2, J Oaks; 3, J Bland.

Under 18 Years 1, L Benn; 2, J Oaks; 3, T Barnes.

12½st 1, A Price; 2, T Barnes.

All weights 1, R Lowery; 2, L Benn; 3, A Price.

Girls 1, Emily; 2, Jenny.

Best Performance Dan Robson

Date:

Sat 8th Nov 7.45pm Carlisle Wrestling Club First Points Night in the Currock House Gym

9th November 2006

A REVIEW OF THE STATISTICS.....

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

.....of the Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling season 2006 gives a picture of a good year when there were lots of events, the winnings were well shared out and young wrestlers provided a solid foundation for our traditional sport.

For quality and quantity John Harrington of Bewaldeth, still only 19 years of age, headed the lists with 36 wins, well ahead of the Graham Brocklebank with 14 senior wins. Harrington also won two Guinness Trophies, the 13st Championship and all three senior CWWA Points Trophies.

For sheer quality Andrew Carlile set the standard with three Championships, two Guinness Trophies and election as The Wrestlers' Wrestler at the Centenary Dinner

Harry Brocklebank's three sons Ben, Graham and Thomas won 58 events between them, mainly in the south of the county, but Ben travelled to Rothbury in Northumberland to win the Under 12 Years Centenary Challenge, and Graham won his Under 18 Years Championship north of the Border at Langholm Show.

For single-minded keenness Jack Brown of Haydon Bridge takes the accolade, for he attended virtually every event open to him, won 24 times and took the Under 12 Years Points Trophy.

One wrestler who had a 100 per cent record was Rab McNamara who travelled down from East Kilbride for four prestigious events and won them all. His Heavyweight Championship success at Powburn meant that he had won the title ten times in succession and in so doing had set a new record.

CWWA World Champions 2006

All Weights- Rab McNamara, East Kilbride- Powburn Show, Northumberland

15st- Joe Robson, Grayrigg- Langholm Common Riding

14st- David Atkinson, Carlisle - Westmorland County Show

13st- John Harrington, Bewaldeth- Egremont Crab Fair

12st- Andrew Carlile, Carlisle - Morpeth Fair, Northumberland

11st- Andrew Carlile, Carlisle - Patterdale Country Fair

10½st- Andrew Carlile, Carlisle- Penrith Show

Under 18 Years- Graham Brocklebank, Warton- Langholm Show

Under 18 Years/10st- Tom Mason, Milnthorpe - Forestburngate, Northumberland

Under 15 Years- Adam Ridley, Slaggyford- Dalston Show, Carlisle

Under 15 Years/8st- Craig Ridley, Slaggyford- Great Eccleston Show, Lancashire

Centenary Challenge Winners

Under 12 Years- Ben Brocklebank, Warton- Rothbury

Under 15 Years- Fin Healy, Tynemouth- Cumberland Show

Under 18 Years- Joe Harrington, Kirkbampton- Westmorland Show

11½st- Rab Clark, Glasgow- Westmorland Show

13½st- David Barnes, Dearham- Rothbury

All Weights- Rab McNamara, East Kilbride - Cumberland Show

Ladies- Tracey Hodgson, Dent- Penrith

Individual Winners at Open Events

Ladies

Tracey Hodgson 12 wins

Frederique Nouvel 6

Katy Brown 2

Donna Thompson 2

(3 others had a single win)

Boys

Jack Brown 24 wins

Ben Brocklebank 18

Graham Brocklebank 16

Scott Brocklebank 15

Adam Ridley 15

Joe Harrington 12

Fin Healy 11

Andrew Ord 9

James Raine 7

Luke Benn 4

Graeme Benson 4

Jack Lashley 4

William Hayhurst 4

Jack Hale 3

Phil Housby 2

Stuart Mason 2

W Noimai 2

(23 others had a single win)

Men

John Harrington 36 wins

Graham Brocklebank 14

Andrew Carlile 13

Thomas Brocklebank 10

Joe Robson 6

Darren Whitfield 6

Jason Davidson 5

Richard Fox 5

Richard Dixon 4

Rab McNamara 4

David Atkinson 3

Carl Clark 3

Mathieu Le Dour 3

Robert Leiper 3

David Barnes 2

Ken Ridley 2

Andrew Fox 2

Simon Hamilton 2

Joe Harrington 2

Alan Jones 2

Robert Lowery 2

Jean-Marie Menesgou 2

Mick Phillips 2

Richard Younger 2

(21 others had a single win)

CWWA Points Trophy Winners

Under 12 Years Jack Brown

Under 15 Years Scott Brocklebank

Under 18 Years Graham Brocklebank

Ladies Tracey Hodgson

11½st John Harrington

13st John Harrington

All Weights John Harrington

Guinness Trophy Winners

Cumberland Show Richard Fox

Ambleside John Harrington

Grasmere Andrew Carlile

Keswick Show Andrew Carlile

Egremont Crab Fair John Harrington

59 events were affiliated to the CWWA in 2006. Affiliated Academies are at Carlisle, Kendal, Milnthorpe, Rothbury, and Waberthwaite.

Dates:

Saturday 18th November

Weigh-in 11am to 12.30pm Under 21s Scottish Open Backhold Championships 2006, Barmulloch Community Centre, 46 Wallacewell Quadrant, Glasgow G21 3PX Three age categories for males and females 13 and Under with 6weights from 4½st to 10½st and Open; 17 and Under with 4 weights from 6½st to 10½st and Open; and 21 and Under with 5weights from 8½st to 12½st and Open.

16th November 2006

W HARRISON OF SILLOTH, THE DOMINANT BOY WRESTLER IN THE LATE FIFTIES.....

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

.....and 14st Champion in 1965, has died at the age of 63 after a prolonged illness. Bill was one of those lads who was fully grown at 14 years of age and was unbeatable amongst the boys and a difficult opponent for the men at an early age.

This level of achievement was all the more remarkable when you consider that the great champions Tom Harrington and Bob Millican were his contemporaries and sparring partners at Wigton Academy. They certainly put in the hours of training needed for success. Tom Harrington remembers a man with a wooden leg coming to spectate at a training session. At the end of the night he told Tom and Bill that he had watched them all night and that Bill had won 37 falls to Tom's 35.

He first won the Under 18 Years Championship in 1959 when he felled Billy Bland in the final at Brampton Show. The following year he repeated the feat at Bardon Mill when he beat Ivor Armstrong of Roweltown in the final. In 1965 he had no distance to travel to win the 14st Championship Belt at Kirkbride against Brian Armstrong of Roweltown, but he obviously took a long time to go home for he was in serious trouble with his dad when failed to do up at the farm that night.

I knew him as a strong skilful wrestler, always immaculately stripped out, a good winner and a sporting loser.

He is survived by his wife, son and three daughters, and eight grandchildren.

Statistics

When I compiled the statistics for the 2006 Grass Season I was astonished to find that Craig Ridley of Slaggyford had only a single win to his name, for I had seen him wrestle with such skill at many events. Perhaps the reason for this situation lies in the fact that his only win was in the Under 18 Years/8st Championship: he is a slight figure who is all the time competing against heavier and stronger lads. Many lighter boy wrestlers have to endure barren years when their age is against them. Richard Dixon, all conquering in the Under 12 Years, had some lean years thereafter but stuck with it until he is now able to compete against anyone as an adult.

When it comes to indoor competition the situation changes as weight becomes the criterion rather than age, and Craig Ridley flourished on the mats at Currock House when Carlisle Wrestling Club held its first Points Night of the 2006-2007 Season. He was the unanimous choice of the judges for the best performance trophy as he won at 8½st, 10st and at Under 15 Years. Each win was the result of the skilful use of a range of chips: hipes and hanks and inside-clicks. No doubt the success was just that bit sweeter as he felled big brother Adam in two finals.

Jack Brown also won three times as he stood head and shoulders above the rest both in stature and skill. The winner of the Under 18s was a surprise packet, as Phil Housby has not followed the wrestling much during the summer, but at a tall 15st he is an imposing figure. His biggest test was in the semi-finals when the Centenary Challenge winner, Joe Harrington succumbed to a powerful back-heel.

Amongst the men, John Harrington had a clean sweep of three wins. He lost falls to Andrew Carlile and Richard Dixon at various times during the night, but was able to claw back the ascendancy in subsequent deciders.

Results:

Carlisle Wrestling Club First Points Night

6st 1, J Brown; 2, D Miller; 3, K Miller.

7st 1, J Brown; 2, K Miller; 3, D Miller.

8½st 1, C Ridley; 2, A Ridley; 3, P Murray; 4, K Brown.

10st 1, C Ridley; 2, M Atkinson; 3, J Brown; 4, W Noimai.

Under 12 Years 1, J Brown; 2, B Wilde; 3, K Miller.

Under 15 Years 1, C Ridley; 2, B Wilde; 3, M Atkinson; 4, D Miller.

Under 18 Years 1, P Housby; 2, A Ridley; 3, Joe Harrington; K Brown.

11½st 1, John Harrington; 2, R Dixon; 3, A Carlile; 4, A Davidson.

13st 1, John Harrington; 2, A Carlile; 3, R Dixon; 4, A Davidson.

All Weights 1, John Harrington; 2, A Carlile; 3, Joe Harrington; 4, R Dixon.

Dates:

Saturday 18th November

Weigh-in 11am to 12.30pm Under 21s Scottish Open Backhold Championships 2006, Barmulloch Community Centre, 46 Wallacewell Quadrant, Glasgow G21 3PX Three age categories for males and females 13 and Under with 6weights from 4½st to 10½st and Open; 17 and Under with 4 weights from 6½st to 10½st and Open; and 21 and Under with 5 weights from 8½st to 12½st and Open.

Saturday 2nd December

(Weigh-in 7. 15 pm) Academy Shield at Currock House Carlisle

29th November 2006

THE LAKELAND SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR 2006.....

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

.....is David Atkinson of Carlisle. At the Lakeland Sports Promoters Association Presentation Luncheon the citation pointed out that he was not the most prolific winner, but had won two of the biggest events of the LSPA calendar. At Grasmere he won the 13 stones in an epic final with the Breton Champion, Mathieu Le Dour. The victory was all the more remarkable as he had just returned to the ring after a year of recovery from a badly broken leg sustained at Ambleside Sports.

The other major win was at The Westmorland Show in the mud. He warmed up with a second place in the 13 stones, before winning the 14st Championship Belt with his usual brand of attacking wrestling. He was also commended for his dynamic role as a wrestling coach, especially in the preparation of the English team for the recent Youth International.

Another wrestler, Tracy Hodgson, won the Junior Sports Personality award. Her wrestling is limited because there are not always girls' events on the programme, but she won everything that was open to her. Most notably she won the Open Under 18 Girls at Grasmere. In the process she injured her knee, but still hobbled to victory in the senior event, too. Her citation pointed out that her attitude and presence had led to a big increase of female wrestling events.

Her cousins the Brocklebanks had a good day, too, with Ben, Scott, and Graham all receiving nominations in their categories.

Two other senior wrestlers were also nominated: Richard Fox had good wins at Killington, Ambleside, and The Westmorland Show, and last year's Lakeland Sportsperson was nominated again for a string of wins in the LSPA events.

With the exception of Dave Allen, an ever present track runner, and the veteran runner Matt McMahon, the remaining nominations were mainly for fell runners: Lauren Munro-Bennett dominated the Under 12 Years girls' events and Tom Sessford did the same for Under 14 Boys. Father and son Mark and Ryan Croasdale were both nominated; father figured in the veterans, and son in the Under 12s.

At the end of all the annual awards, a special presentation was made to Dennis Bevins for his lifetime contribution to Lakeland Sports. He was a formidable athlete in his own right in the Post-War years and he kept competing into his eighties, but he was also a great trainer of track and fell runners including the great Fred Reeves.

Academy Shield

Tomorrow's Academy Shield looks like being the most competitive for many a year with six teams in the lists. Nothumberland returns to the fray in the form of a young Rothbury team. The West of Cumbria is represented by Waberthwite re-inforced by new wrestlers from Wyndham School, Egremont, where fifty lads are recently attended a session after school. Carlisle will put in two teams again, and the south of the county is represented by the academies at Kendal and Milnthorpe.

The Academy Shield Competition takes place in Currock House at 7.30pm on Saturday, 2nd December. As well as the main event, there will also be Open Classes at Under 13, 16 and 18 Years, 12½st and All Weights. And although at present there is no place for girls on the teams, there at least will be two open categories for females at 9st and All Weights.

On Sunday 10th December there will be a Slide Show of the 2006 wrestling season at Currock House at 7.30 for 8pm, £3 for adults, £1 children (max £8 per family).

21st December 2006

FOR 200 YEARS CARLISLE HAS BEEN A 'MOTHER RING'.....

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

.....for Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling. This year's Heavyweight Centenary Challenge was held in Rickerby Park. Before that Bitts Park and the Cumberland Show hosted major wrestling competitions. And earliest of all, the old racecourse at the Swifts was the major event of the wrestling year.

In 1809 wrestling, sponsored by the local aristocrats and gentry, was added to Carlisle Races programme to boost flagging attendances. In October 1811 on the first day of the races, 20 guineas were wrestled for on the Swifts in a roped ring, sixty yards in diameter the wrestling was most severely contested in the presence of 10,000 people, by some of the most sinewy and active youths we ever saw enter a ring. We observed among the spectators the Marquis of Queensberry, the Earl of Lonsdale, Lord Lowther etc.

The Carlisle wrestling was a major sporting event, and that is confirmed by a watercolour of two wrestlers painted in 1813. Two paunchy men stripped to their sark and britches grapple on what is clearly the Swifts, with the River Eden meandering behind them and a horse-race in action. To the left of the figures is the finishing post and flag; to the right in the background is Rickerby House, later to become Eden School.

The painting, however, is not recording a wrestling event, but is a political cartoon.

The painting was loaned to Tullie House as part of the Blood Sweat and Tears exhibition earlier in the year and Matthew Constantine, Keeper of Social History at the time, but now moved on to Bolton Museum, wrote a short paper about the cartoon's interpretation. The image is a fascinating piece of political commentary from a crucial period in the social history of Carlisle and Cumberland. Like many pieces of satire from the past, the exact contemporary meaning is now obscure, but some educated guesses can be made.

His educated guesses explore the political power struggle between the Tories and the Whigs, and a new factor, the wealthy middle classes who had lots of money but no vote in the old electoral system. After years of expensive and violent political rivalry between the Tories (the Lowther family) and the Whigs (the Howards of Corby Castle) a cosy arrangement was drawn up for them to share the two Carlisle seats between them. For the 1812 General Election the pact was shattered when a third candidate entered the scene, supported financially by the mill owners such as Dixon and Ferguson. The Whig candidate James Curwen had made himself politically unpopular over several years and he came to realise that he was going to lose, so he resigned leaving the independent, Sir Henry Fawcett to become an MP.

Under the wrestlers' bellies a three horse race is underway with the jockeys wearing silks of the appropriate political colours. Fawcett is in the lead, and Curwen is last. The two wrestlers who dominate the picture wear ribbons in their belts, blue for the Whigs and yellow for the Tories. Matthew Constantine suggests that the likeliest interpretation is that although an independent' MP had won the election race, in fact the age-old county power struggle between the yellows and the blues was continuing as it ever had.

The picture is unsigned, but from the style it may possibly be by William Brown, a local artist who painted other scenes loaded with local references.

Two international wrestling events are on offer to our wrestlers next year. We have been invited to send a team to the Breton Backhold Championships which take place on Saturday 24th of February in the town of Carhaix. The organisers are willing to subsidise transport if we take twelve male, six female wrestlers and two referees.

The European Senior Championships of the IFCW will be held in Leon, Northern Spain April 19th to 23rd

31st December 2006

2006 - THE ONE HUNDREDTH BIRTHDAY

(CLICK on thumbnail to see a larger picture - CLICK anywhere EXCEPT on the larger image to return to this page)

.....of the Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling Association, has been a wonderful year for wrestling..one of the best I can remember.

A special year needs special events, and this year the Centenary Challenges, the European Espoirs Championships and the CWWA Centenary dinner were all huge successes.

Jimmy Pringle, the mainstay of wrestling in Northumberland, was the man who suggested the series of high prize-money events, which became known as Centenary Challenges. The idea was to allocate categories to the three main areas of wrestling, Northumberland, North Cumbria and the Borders, and South Cumbria and North Lancashire, and ask Governing Board members in those areas to provide extra sponsorship, venues and formats. The Cumbrian Centenary Challenges were attached to the county shows at Carlisle and Kendal with the Ladies Challenge going to Penrith Show. Each of these provided an extra buzz to existing events which lifted the entries, the expectations and the crowd.

Best of all was the Northumbrian response when a special evening in the old Rothbury Mart brought a full house to the tiered seating round the ring and all the best wrestlers in great fettle from Scotland, Brittany and all our home regions. Even the old lags who fondly remembered the intense action and support of the old Academy League, fifty years ago, reckoned that the Rothbury Centenary Challenge had surpassed it all.

There were times when the organisers of the European Espoirs Championships of the International Federation of Celtic Wrestling thought they had been mad to pick up the responsibility of organising the event at ultra short notice after the Dutch had to cancel. But in the end the region did us proud. We found a perfect venue at Lime House School with a modern Sports Hall, good accommodation and food. An Olympic Quality Freestyle wrestling mat was hired from the British Wrestling Association. The County Council, Neighbourhood Forums and healthy range of local businesses helped to cover the several thousand pounds needed to stage the Championships, which were acknowledged as a great success by our international partners.

The Championships coincided with the CWWA Centenary Dinner, so the international teams joined over two hundred wrestlers and friends for a lavish presentation night at the Shepherds Inn, Carlisle, when old photos and old memories were enthusiastically reviewed.

Successful special events are fine and good, but would be a hollow matter if the annual routine was below par. Of course, there were occasional events with poor entries and wrestling rings blasted with rain, but, in general, the whole season was a joy to follow. The surge of interest in wrestling amongst youngsters at the old academies of Carlisle, Kendal, Milnthorpe and Waberthwaite was enhanced by the influx of wrestlers from the newly reformed Rothbury Academy who travelled widely and wrestled well. A ten week course of wrestling at Grasmere School brought wrestling back to the Rush Bearing, and extra wrestlers in the Lakeland events. At the end of the year an upsurge of interest in wrestling at Wyndham School, Egremont, led to over fifty lads turning up to after-school sessions.

There is no shortage of venues for wrestling, with sixty events spread over the Northern Counties and the Borders of Scotland from April to very late and damp October. The standard of wrestling, and the attacking style in general use, kept big crowds enthralled for hours, and came to a climax round the Bank Holiday weekend when one of the best teams of Breton wrestlers to compete in our area lifted the wrestling to new levels of intensity and skill.

From the moment that wrestling season roared into action beside a massive static engine running at full decibels at Hethersgill Vintage Society Rally at Carlisle Airport, to the time when Emily and Jenny squelched around in their spotted wellies at Buttermere Show, I have enjoyed every minute of a vintage wrestling season. And I have watched thousands of others delighting in the entertainment and excitement of our ancient and wonderful sport.