

7th January 2005

TOP EURO WRESTLING EVENT IS IN DOUBT

A RECENT e-mail message from Jean-François Hubert, the president of the Breton Wrestling Federation, has cast doubt on whether the European Championships of Celtic Wrestling will take place this year as planned.

"Hello, Some news. We still are trying to find a city council which could give us enough money to organise the 2005 championship in Brittany instead Scotland. Lots of them just say that we are too late....(or too expensive).

Thus to date, nothing can be sure about this championship.

Wrestlers want it, we'll try to do it. If any other federation has something to propose...."

Originally, the Scottish Wrestling Bond undertook to stage the 2005 Championships, but two years of searching for grants proved fruitless.

As in England, most of the grants are for Olympic sports, no matter how few participants there are nationally.

When the Scottish parliament was constituted, there were hopes that indigenous Scottish sports such as Shinty, Quoits, Wrestling and the Highland Games events would benefit, but that has not proved to be the case. Nor do Highland Dancing and Piping competitions benefit from the new independence.

Twenty years ago, when the first Championships were held, the financial demands were much more reasonable for there were only four nations competing and rudimentary hostel accommodation was the norm.

In 1997 the Spanish region of Leon set new standards with eight national teams accommodated in a hotel, courtesy of £20,000 from local government.

When the Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling Association last hosted the European Championships in 1999, we had support from local government sources, but that fell a long way short of the total, and in the end over sixty firms and individuals contributed the £14,000 which was required.

The Scottish Wrestling Bond does not have this spread of local support so without major sponsors they are unable to proceed.

In Brittany, their cultural heritage translates much more directly into funding, and they can usually stage big events in a variety of cities and towns.

This time there has not been enough notice to allow that to happen.

Dates: Wednesday 12th January, Carlisle Wrestling Club Points Night

14th January 2005

JOHN REALLY CLICKED IN CARLISLE BOUTS

THE old Carlisle "mother ring" on the Swifts may have been under several feet of floodwater, but wrestling went ahead as usual on the mats in the cosy confines of the Currock House Gym last week.

For sheer consistency, and for some brilliant falls, John Harrington, took the eye with his win in the Under-18s and three second places in the seniors in Carlisle Wrestling Club's second points night of the indoor season.

The high points was when he felled Russell Housby in the All Weights. Housby, weighing in at 18½st, usually swats down the lighter wrestlers, but this time he failed to make the most of his first lift and he progressively lost position until Harrington caught him with an inside click which sent him reeling against the gym wall.

At the end of the round-robin system both wrestlers had lost one fall so it had to be a re-run for the decider. This time Housby was unruffled and felled Harrington to gain the top points. Andrew Carlile was out of the points in the All Weights, but prior to that he was in unstoppable form. Carlile is one of those wrestlers who are difficult to characterise.

He is not a buttocker or a hanker or a hiper, yet he can use all those techniques when needed. He has a reactive style which homes in on the slightest chance. Most of his falls came from sudden spins and twists, in the middle of the action. This lightning form gave him full points in both the lightweights and the middleweights.

The old battered trophy for the best performance in the junior wrestling went to Northumberland with Craig Ridley who won the Under 12 Years against the experienced Daniel Ewart and the 7 stones against his older brother Adam. His success, like that of Carlile, was the result of decisive twists at the crucial moment in a bout, the sort of instinctive skill that cannot be taught.

Results: Carlisle Wrestling Club 6st: 1, J Wright; 2, H Housby.

7st 1, C Ridley; 2, A Ridley; 3, S Hird; 4, J Wright.

81/2st 1, C Lowry; 2, W Noimai; 3, A Ridley; 4, T Strong.

10st 1, R Dixon; 2, T Strong; 3, C Lowry; 4, W Noimai.

Girls results : 1, H Housby; 2, S Hird. Under 12 Years 1, C Ridley; 2, D Ewart; 3, H Housby; 4, S Hird.

Under 15 Years 1, P Housby; 2, M Harrington; 3, J Ewart; 4, T Strong.

Under 18 Years 1 John Harrington; 2, R Dixon; 3, Joe Harrington; 4, A Hird.

111/2st 1, A Carlile; 2, John Harrington; 3, R Dixon.

13st 1, A Carlile; 2, A Walton; 3, John Harrington; 4, Joe Harrington. All Weights 1, R Housby; 2, John Harrington; 3, A Walton; 4, R Dixon

4th February 2005

COUNTY SPORT IN URGENT NEED OF NEW BLOOD

CUMBERLAND and Westmorland wrestling's greatest need each year is for more wrestlers to enter each event.

But whilst the focus is on the action in the ring, the sport does not take place in a vacuum.

Each event has to be organised, and that is labour intensive.

Look at the picture of the "staff" at Wolsingham Show last year. It contains most of the ingredients any good wrestling event needs (from left to right):

1. The next generation: Michael Harrington lies at his father's feet, focused on the action, and with any luck, picking up some ideas for his next bout.

2. Alf Harrington: a commentator, with encyclopaedic knowledge, instant recall, remarkable eye-sight, a clear voice, ready wit, public relations skills and the patience to await the referee's decision.....he says!

3. The wrestlers, in neat traditional strips, absorbed in every detail of every move. Alan Jones is passing on his knowledge each week at Carlisle Wrestling Club. Alan Walton has two champion sons.

4. The ladies at the table: calm and efficient; they need diplomatic skills, a big supply of white cardboard tickets and fast handwriting.

Above all, they need to work to a system which is consistent, open to scrutiny and keeps the action flowing so that no-one in the crowd thinks about going for a cup of tea.

Linda Scott, Jill Robson and Doreen Bragg must be well on top of the job as they lead back to enjoy watching what they have organised.

5. Silverware and good prize money.

The big cup on the table is the Wrestling Association 12-stone Championship Cup, but Wolsingham also gives trophies and good prize-money for each section.

6. An attentive crowd enjoying the wrestling and the sunshine. A responsive crowd can turn an event into a memorable occasion.

Forthcoming dates: Wednesday February 9, 7.45pm: Carlisle Wrestling Club Points Night

11th February 2005

PAUL WRESTLES HIS WAY TO TOP TROPHY

IN summer, Cumberland and Westmorland wrestling draws large crowds round the wrestling rings but in winter, on the mats, the wrestling is just for a few cognoscenti and the wrestlers themselves.

On Wednesday night, in the Currock House gym, local wrestling was alive and well, with wrestlers from West Cumbria and Northumberland joining the townies for a night of dynamic action.

At one end of the scale, young Paul Murray, of Arlecdon, had a great night, winning two categories and figuring prominently in several other sections.

He was awarded the trophy for the best performance of the night in the junior wrestling.

Paul's technique would have pleased my father for he went for hold and then used it well, rushing his opponents forward onto their noses, or shoulders or anything else that got in the way.

Three times heavier and twice his age, Russell Housby, of Aspatria, also had a good night. He had a long wait as the youngsters and lighter wrestlers had their time but once in action, he was unbeatable.

All opponents were hoisted aloft, taken for a walk around the ring and then spun into the mats with minimum effort.

Alan Walton, of Haltwhistle, also had a good night. You have to admire the veteran wrestler, keeping the youngsters at bay, but only just.

Richard Dixon, of Lessonhall, near Wigton, took a surprise fall from him in the Round Robin, which meant that three wrestlers had to compete again. This time Walton made no mistake, culminating in a leg-up buttock which loaded up John Harrington nicely.

Next week there is no wrestling at the club, as the gym is to be re-floored, but Tom Harrington and I will be going down to Waberthwaite to see the Academy in action and then doing some coaching of their coaches as part of the move towards the CWWA Intermediate Coaching Certificate.

Meanwhile, several wrestlers have shown interest in travelling to Brittany for the Backhold Championships on March 20. Anyone who wishes to participate should contact me on 016974 73559. The entries are due soon.

Results – Carlisle Wrestling Club – Girls: 1 S Hird; 2 H Housby.

6st 1: P Murray; 2 J Wright; 3 H Housby; 4 P Gale.

7st: 1 P Murray; 2 P Gale; 3 J Wright; 4 H Housby.

81/2st: 1 W Noimai; 2 J Aitkenhead; 3 P Murray; 4 J Wright.

10st: 1 R Dixon; 2 J Aitkenhead; 3 W Noimai; 4 A Hird.

Under 12 Years: 1 D Ewart; 2 P Murray; 3 H Housby; 4 S Hird.

Under-15 Years: 1 W Noimai; 2 P Gale; 3 A Hird; 4 J Ewart.

Under-18 years: 1 John Harrington; 2 R Dixon; 3 W Noimai; 4 M Harrington.

111/2st: 1 A Carlile; 2 R Dixon; 3 John Harrington.

13st: 1 A Walton; 2 John Harrington; 3 R Dixon; 4 A Carlile.

All weights: 1 R Housby; 2 John Harrington; 3 A Carlile; 4 R Dixon

18th February 2005

CLOCK TICKING DOWN AS WRESTLING COACHING DATE CLOSES IN

PREPARATION is the name of the game in the wrestling world at the moment.

The clock is ticking down and only three weeks of preparation time remains for the next stage in the Wrestling Association's Coaching Scheme.

The assessment of coaches for the CWWA Intermediate Certificate will take place at Currock House, Carlisle on Sunday, March 6.

A flurry of activity is in the air with specialist coaching sessions at Waberthwaite, Milnthorpe and Carlisle.

The Northumbrians will also be involved when they travel over to Carlisle for instruction.

A longer period of preparation remains for the European Championships of Celtic Wrestling to be held in Landerneau near Brest in Brittany on the May 7 and May 8.

Alan Jones, who was the team coach in Sardinia 2003, will be Mr Motivator again this year, and he foresees a period of specialist training leading to the selection of first and second choice wrestlers a month before the event.

Wrestlers who wish to take part need to work hard at their levels of fitness, especially stamina training, as the event involves a lot of wrestling over a period of two days.

The Breton style is particularly arduous as it involves five minutes of continuous action for each bout.

Fitness is no use without technique, so there will have to be training in Gouren, the Breton style.

For many years our wrestlers were novices in Gouren, relying on speed, strength and native wit, rather than detailed knowledge of the sport.

Slowly, as experience accumulated, the standards have risen.

With the arrival of the Breton coach, Silvain Begoc, in Carlisle for an extended stay four years ago, the skill level improved dramatically.

Now, wrestlers such as Andrew Carlile and David Atkinson can compete on equal terms with the Bretons in their domestic events.

The Wrestling Association even owns its own crash mat to enable wrestlers to practise the more spectacular Gouren throws repeatedly without damage.

Any wrestler interested in being in the team for the European Championships should contact me on 016974 73559

Sport and politics, unfortunately, have to mix, and one of the issues to resolve is whether to re-admit the Canary Islands wrestlers to future competitions.

The decision must be made after they suddenly withdrew from the International Federation in the early nineties after a change of personnel when they had undertaken to host the event.

We and the Bretons were left with air tickets and broken plans.

Nearer to home, the Cornish Wrestling Association may have observers at the Championships, with a view to further involvement.

When the IFCW was set up in 1985, they refused to be involved, so a breakaway group from Penwith, represented Cornish wrestling (but badly!) at the Championships.

As the Cornish wrestling tries to revitalise itself, this contact must be encouraged.

25th February 2005

ACADEMY QUARTET FLOURISH

CUMBRIA'S four Wrestling Academies are flourishing in 2005 after a sticky beginning to the indoor season last Autumn.

The New Year has brought a lot of young lads and a few girls onto the mats at Carlisle, Kendal, Milnthorpe and Waberthwaite.

Kendal Academy is booming after some time in the doldrums. Senior Coach, John Wilson, supported by 14st Champion, Joseph Robson, has been inundated with youngsters this season, nearly too many to cope with, he says.

There are so many wrestlers that the weekly internal competitions which were aimed at adding a bit of spice to the training sessions take up most of the time available.

The Academy still lacks active senior wrestlers, but they have an excellent base for future years if the present enthusiasm continues.

Kendal Academy meets each Friday at 7.30pm, with their Final Night and Trophy Presentation taking place on March 4.

Nearby Milnthorpe Academy was short of wrestlers initially this year, but is now working at full capacity. The coach, David Parsons, prefers to work with about a dozen wrestlers.

Milnthorpe Academy focuses on youngsters in the ten to 15 years age-group at present, and recently had their first girl taking part in training sessions.

It is planned for Carlisle youngsters to share a session of training at Dallam Sports Pavilion this week, so she may have some female reinforcements.

A session of coaching the coaches will take place at Milnthorpe as part of the Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling Association Certificate course. Milnthorpe meets each Thursday at 6.45pm.

Waberthwaite Academy, seems a long way from the other wrestling academies, but the CWWA Coaching initiative is keeping them in touch with other centres.

Their academy, too, has a good basis of young wrestlers this year after their coach, Tom Porter, visited local village schools to give taster sessions to the youngsters. Last week, Senior Coaches from Carlisle went down to participate in training at Waberthwaite Village Hall, and saw some lively young wrestlers in action, as well as furthering the Coaching Scheme.

Wabertwaite's training night is Wednesdays at 7.30pm

Carlisle Wrestling Club had a surge of youngsters through the doors in the New Year so that the Gym at Currock House is circled by young wrestlers, parents and onlookers each Wednesday evening.

The main coaches this year are Tom Harrington, Alan Jones and Andrew Carlile and they can be well pleased with the quality of wrestling they have inspired.

The main focus is on training rather than competition, but once a month the whole session is given over to the Points Competition which runs throughout the indoor months.

There is no Academy in Northumberland at present, but two Northumbrians, Darren Whitfield and Keith Younger are planning to attend a coaching session at Carlisle prior to the Coaching Day on 6th March.

Wrestlers who have already gained their Basic Coaching Certificate will meet at Currock House, Carlisle to try to gain the main CWWA qualification for coaches. The Course will involve lectures on fitness and exercise, and principles of education.

Also on the same day is the Scottish Open Under 21 Championships with 19 boys categories and 18 for girls. The event takes place at Barmulloch Community Centre.

For details contact me on 016974 73559

4th March 2005

TRAINERS IN ABUNDANCE AS THE WRESTLING MATS GET BUSY

CUMBERLAND and Westmorland Wrestling coaching can seem a solitary business at the smaller academies, such as Milnthorpe, where David Parsons is usually the only trainer on the mats.

Last week was considerably more crowded when lads from Carlisle Wrestling Club joined in his training session for the first part of the evening, and coaches from Carlisle and Kendal congregated for a discussion session prior to this week-end's CWWA Coaching Course at Carlisle.

There were no such things as coaching qualifications for the likes of Jack Thackeray who was the main coach at Kendal Academy over many years when it met at the Bryce Institute in Burneside.

Now, however, the trend is towards formal qualifications in all areas, and our local wrestling is no exception.

Already there is a cohort of wrestlers with the CWWA Basic Coaching Certificate, but Sunday's Course will move on a stage further, with lectures on the theory of fitness and on educational principles, before an afternoon of assessment of coaching skills in Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling.

At a later date each candidate will be assessed in a "real life" situation when they take responsibility for a coaching session at an academy, school or youth club, before gaining the CWWA Coaching Certificate.

Carlisle Wrestling Club has always been fortunate in the number of committed individuals who support the academy, so, even in thin times there is always mutual support for the coaches.

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This week was far from thin when Wigton Young Farmers Club joined the regulars on the mats for a hectic wrestling session.

With Tom Harrington, Alan Jones, Andrew Carlile, Joe Harrington and John Harrington and Richard Dixon all weighing in with coaching advice for the novices, they could scarcely avoid improvement.

And the three girls who took part looked particularly dangerous!

DATES

Sunday March 6: 9.30am to 4pm CWWA coaching course at Currock House, Carlisle.

Wednesday March 9: Carlisle Wrestling Club final points and presentation night

11th March 2005

CRAIG LANDS TROPHY FOR A SECOND MONTH

THE real value of a trophy is what it represents rather than what was paid for it: a universal truth especially worthy at Carlisle Wrestling where a small, battered cup which long ago lost all its silver-plating is awarded each month for the best performance in all the boys' wrestling.

Last month Craig Ridley won it; this month he won it again, for a display of elegant wrestling which relied on timing and balance as well as an impressive range of chips. He buttocked, back-heeled, hiped and twisted. Best of all was a right leg outside hype which felled an opponent nearly four stones heavier than himself with the greatest economy of effort.

If the men had a Victor Ludorum Trophy the winner would certainly have been Andrew Carlile of Carlisle, for he went through the whole night unbeaten, after a shaky first bout with Richard Dixon. Carlile's main weapon was a variation on a salto, a throw used in Freestyle wrestling where you throw your opponent over your shoulder and arch your back in such a way that he hits the ground first

The wide draw of Carlisle Wrestling Club is well illustrated by the list of trophy winners with wrestlers from West Cumbria to the West and the South Tyne valley in the East. There is even a wrestler from Carlisle.

Carlisle Wrestling Club March Points Competition

6st 1, P Murray; 2, P Gale; 3, H Housby.

7st 1, C Ridley; 2, H Housby; 3, P Murray; 4, R Main.

81/2st 1, C Lowry; 2, W Noimai; 3, M Harrington; 4, A Ridley.

10st 1, W Noimai; 2, C Ridley; 3, A Ridley; 4, R Main.

Girls 1, L Jones; 2, S Hird; 3, H Housby.

Under 12 Years 1, C Ridley; 2, J Main; 3, D Ewart; 3, R Main.

Under 15 Years 1, W Noimai; 2, C Lowry; 3, C Ridley; 4, J Main.

Under 18 Years 1, R Dixon; 2, P Housby; 3, J Ewart; 4, A Ridley.

111/2st Men 1, A Carlile; 2, R Dixon.

13st 1 A Carlile; 2, A Walton; 3, R Dixon.

All Weights 1, A Carlile; 2, R Wharton; 3, R Dixon; 4, A Walton

Trophy winners for the Winter season: 6st, Paul Murray, Arlecdon; 7st, Craig Ridley, Slaggyford; 81/2st, Watchai Noimai, Anthorn; 10st, Richard Dixon, Lessonhall; Under 12 Years, C Ridley; Under 15 Years, W Noimai; Under 18 Years, R Dixon; Girls, Sally Hird, Gamblesby; 111/2st, Andrew Carlile, Carlisle; 13st, Alan Walton, Haltwhistle; All Weights, Russell Housby, Aspatria

Diary dates: Friday, March 18 at 7.30pm CWWA Annual General Meeting, at Penrith Rugby Club

18th March 2005

TREVOR'S TRACTOR FACTOR ATTRACTING ATTENTION!

CUMBERLAND and Westmorland Wrestling had London visitors last week, but not to compete, or to sample the sweat and skill of academy action. Instead, they were looking for embroidery.

They were seeking material for an exhibition of folk art which would be shown in the Barbican Centre, London, before touring round Britain and abroad.

Previously, Tom Harrington's wrestling strip was exhibited on a wall of the Tate Gallery in London a few years ago, and this visit was a follow-up.

Of course, the embroidery motifs on the traditional wrestling strips are not in themselves traditional, but reflect the individual taste of the wrestlers and the embroiderers. One strip which particularly interested them was that of Trevor Hodgson of Dent Dale, who won the heavyweight wrestling at Grasmere last year.

Many years ago Trevor always wore a freebie T-shirt with a Massey-Ferguson tractor printed on the front. For years it stood up to the rigours of Trevor's wrestling, until it faded and tattered itself into oblivion. That could have been the end of it, but it has been reborn. Recently, he sported a new Massey Ferguson, brighter and better, on a new vest embroidered in silk.

A successful day of lectures and assessment for the CWWA Coaching Certificate at Currock House took the Association further along the road to producing properly certificated coaches. Seven candidates have now to be assessed in a real-life coaching situation to gain the first certificates.

Kendal Wrestling Academy rounded off their indoor season with a crowded Finals Night when all the points scored in the past five months were tallied up and trophies awarded.

The most significant trophy of all, that for the most points scored in all sections, went to David Parsons, who is young enough to have competed in the Under 16 Years, but has many years of experience at the Academy.

Only a single point behind him was Ben Brocklebank, who weighs in at under 6st and wrestles at Under 10 years of age. Ben is a grandson of Big Wilf Brocklebank, the dominant heavyweight wrestler in the Seventies.

Kendal academy's winter programme is now completed, but Milnthorpe Academy's indoor season is set to continue throughout April. In their latest competitions, Douglas Parsons beat Ben Hamer in the final of the Under 13 Years despite losing the first fall to a strong cross-buttock.

He tried to repeat the formula, but Parsons stopped the attack before countering by throwing Hamer over backwards. For the deciding fall, Parsons threw his opponent forward off his right hip.

In the Under 15 Years the winner, Tom Mason, had an easier time after his main threat, Simon Knight, slipped up in an early round. Once more Ben Hamer contested a final, but once more had to accept second place.

Dates: Tonight:

7.30pm CWWA agm at Penrith Rugby Club.

Tomorrow: 7.30pm, Waberthwaite Academy Open Night in the Village Hall
U9/U11/U13/U15/U18,6st/8st/10st/13st/AW.

1st April 2005

IT'S OFFICIAL: ALAN IS FIRST QUALIFIED WRESTLING COACH

CUMBERLAND and Westmorland Wrestling now has its first officially qualified coach.

Alan Jones, of Hallbankgate, was assessed as he took the hour-long weekly session at Carlisle Wrestling Club last week as the final part of the CWWA Coaching Certificate course. As usual, youngsters from Northumberland and West Cumbria joined those from the Carlisle area for a lively, active training session. As always, Alan Jones was super-critical of his own performance, seeing it as a stepping stone on the way to further improvements in his coaching style. He acknowledges that a glittering wrestling career does not automatically mean that you are an expert coach. En route to the qualification Jones has attended courses on Child Protection, Fitness Theory and Practice, and Principles of Education. He also demonstrated his ability to coach all the basic wrestling chips and then go into minute detail of the defences and combinations in any given situation. Finally, he had to have "the ability to plan, deliver and take full responsibility for an academy or school training session."

Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling has just taken its first step into the 21st Century. All that remains now is Criminal Records check, the First Aid Courses, the web-site, the Coaching Handbook, and so on! but at least a good start has been made.

The evening was rounded off by the presentation of trophies for the most successful wrestlers in the monthly Points Competitions which run throughout the indoor season. Newcomer Paul Murray, who travels from Arlecdon in West Cumbria to take part, did well in his first season to win the 6st trophy. Craig Ridley, a naturally gifted wrestler from Slaggyford near Alston, won both the 7st and the Under 12 Years. Watchai Noimai, from Anthorn and Richard Dixon from Lessonhall both also won a weight and an age-group. Sally Hird won the girls trophy after a close battle with Helen Housby. The men's lightweights was won by Andrew Carlile, the middleweights by Alan Walton and the Heavyweights by Russell Housby.

The organisers of the Folk Art Exhibition at the Barbican Centre in London are on the outlook for more wrestling costumes to display.

If any wrestler, or ex-wrestler has a striking wrestling strip that they could manage without for a month or two, all in the name of art and promoting our wrestling, please contact me on 016974 73559

8th April 2005

WANTING THE GEAR TO MAKE THEM LOOK COOL KIDS

"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.

22nd April 2005

WRESTLERS HEAD FOR EUROPE

A STRONG team of Cumberland and Westmorland wrestlers will contest the European Championships of Celtic Wrestling in Landerneau, Brittany on May 7 and 8.

The quality of the team of seven is fortuitous, as it consists of the only wrestlers to register an interest in competing, and luckily each wrestler fits one of the weight categories ranging from 62kg to 100+kg.

Richard Dixon of Lessonhall, Wigton, who will wrestle at 62kg (9st 10lb) is the only wrestler with a weight problem, and is whittling away at that week by week.

In 1999 he would have had no weight problems for he was a little spelk of a lad who "with no obvious physical advantage over his rivals was beaten only once in a full season, coming first no fewer than 36 times in the Under 12 Years category. Now he is tall, thin and strong.

Andrew Carlile of Carlisle used to be the wrestler losing weight to fit the flyweight section, but instead he will be at his natural weight when he competes at 68kg (10st 10lb).

Double Champion John Harrington of Bewaldeth at 74kg (11st 10lb) Alan Walton of Haltwhistle at 81kg (12st 10lb) and Robert Leiper of Ponteland at 100kg (15st 10lb) have all had their training curtailed by lambing time on their farms, but they will all be strong contenders in the backhold section. Their problem may be to adapt to the Gouren style without more preparation.

At 90kg (14st 2lb) Joseph Robson of Grayrigg, Kendal is full up to the weight and strong with it. His work as a forester and tree surgeon means that every day is a fitness work-out, but he has also been attending the weekly training sessions at Carlisle to sharpen up for the event.

Russell Housby, from near Aspatria, weighing in at well over 18st, is the superheavyweight contender. Last year he was the overall winner of the Brittany Backhold Championships and won the heavyweight section of the European Junior Championships in Austria, despite wrestling with a badly sprained ankle in the final.

All the wrestlers in the team know how to win as they have all held championship titles. In addition all of them have had international experience previously, so they know what to expect.

Alan Jones of Hallbankgate is the team coach. His wide experience, commitment and passion for the sport should be inspirational for the team.

Eight full teams are expected to take part: Austria, Brittany, Friesland (Holland), Leon from Northern Spain, Iceland, Sardinia, Scotland and ourselves

29th April 2005

WRESTLERS GEAR UP FOR EURO CHALLENGE

THE wrestling season begins in less than a month with the usual flourish with four events packed into the first eight days, including the Boys Under 15 Years Championship hosted by Carlisle Vintage Society.

Before the new season starts, however, there is still unfinished business to complete. Milnthorpe Academy rounds off its winter programme with a Finals Night at Dallam Sports Pavilion in Milnthorpe on Saturday night with open competitions.

Carlisle Wrestling Club's regular Wednesday training sessions will continue. One of the factor in the sustained interest is that a succession of different coaches have been taking the sessions as part of their assessments for the CWWA Coaching Certificate.

At the moment wrestlers can train twice a week on the mats at Currock House, Carlisle, for each Sunday afternoon the wrestlers who are bound for Brittany are training in the Gouren style. A key nucleus of wrestlers has been sharpening up for the European Championships which take place in Brittany in a week's time.

One welcome addition to the wrestling calendar is the move by Lowther Horse Trials, one of the biggest events in Cumbria, to sponsor wrestling with substantial prize-money.

Jennings Brewery's purchase by a Midlands company could have repercussions for wrestling if the regional nature of the product and marketing are affected. We can only hope that "Cross Buttock Ale" will not be a thing of the past, and that the Brewery's substantial support at Grasmere Sports may continue.

6th May 2005

WRESTLERS HEAD FOR BRETON EVENT

A TEAM of wrestlers from the Northern Counties is in Brittany for the European Championships of the International Federation of Celtic Wrestling seeking individual honours in their own style of wrestling and in Gouren, the Breton wrestling style.

In addition they will be trying to regain the fine team trophy which they won in 1987, 1988 and 1993.

An influx of competing nations, such as the Leonese, Sardinians, and Austrians has made it more difficult to win, but we have always given a good account of ourselves.

Two years ago, the last time the Championships were held, our wrestlers amassed more points per head than any other team. Unfortunately, there were not enough heads, for we lacked a lightweight and a heavyweight, so the team had an impossible task even though David Atkinson won the trophy for the best performance in the whole event, and Andrew Carlile was voted best backhold wrestler.

This time we are likely to be without a heavyweight, as Russell Housby withdrew because of work commitments so we are unlikely to bring the main trophy back.

At least we are better off than the Friesland team from Holland which has had to withdraw completely. Most of their wrestlers are Judo players from a strong club based and the championships clash with a Judo event in Holland.

On the home front wrestlers from the Academies at Kendal and Waberthwaite travelled to Milnthorpe on Saturday for the Finals Night and Open Competitions which rounds off the indoor season. Best of the bunch was Graham Brocklebank who cut a swathe through the opposition.

Milnthorpe Wrestling Academy Finals Night

Points Winners

Under 13 Years: 1, Douglas Parsons; 2, Ben Hamer; 3, Stuart Mason; Under 16 Years: 1, Sam Wilkinson; 2, Simon Knight; 3, Tom Mason.

Medals for meritorious performances went to Chris Inman, Luke Carling and Laura Hamer

Open Competitions

Under 10 Years: 1, B Brocklebank; 2, D. Hodgson; 3, W Atkinson;

Under 13 Years 1, S Mason; 2, W North; 3, A Woodend;

Under 16 Years 1, G Brocklebank; 2, S Knight; 3, S Wilkinson;

13st 1, G Brocklebank; 2, S Wilkinson; 3, D Parsons;

All Weights 1, G Brocklebank; 2, S Wilkinson; 3, S Knight.

13th May 2005

EURO GOLD FOR ROBSON

KENDAL wrestler Joseph Robson struck gold in the European Championships of the Fédération Internationale des Luttes Celtiques when he retained his European title in the 90kg class. At the last European Championships in Sardinia two years ago he was unbeaten in the Cumberland and Westmorland style and he did the same again at Landerneau in Brittany.

Competing against wrestlers from Austria, Brittany, Iceland, Leon in Northern Spain, Sardinia and Scotland, he had a tough and largely unsuccessful first day competing in the Breton style.

But, on the second day, he came into his own in the back-hold section, using his height, strength and hipping skills to unsettle his opponents till he could finish off the opposition with a back-heel or a twist.

In the final he met the powerful Spaniard, Daniel Gonzalez, the best of five falls.

Robson is never frightened of wrestling close up to an opponent and he won the first bout of the final with a back-heel when both wrestlers found themselves standing up straight to each other. He took the second fall with a similar throw, but this time as a counter to the Spaniard's attack.

Robson's almost inevitable success was delayed when he lost the third fall. After making all the running he touched with a knee as they fell to the mat.

The victory was not long delayed, however, and came with a flourish as Robson hoisted his opponent onto a hipe and brought him smartly down to the mat.

Robert Leiper of Ponteland went one better than last time when he had the satisfaction of comprehensively beating the Sardinian Stefano Di Pucci in the final of the 100kg backhold class.

Two years ago it was Di Pucci who was master. The two rivals first met in the round-robin pool which sorts out who goes through to the semi-finals and there it was touch and go with Leiper winning by three bruising falls to two. In the final the story changed. Although Di Pucci surprised Leiper with a buttock to win the first fall, thereafter it was one-way traffic in favour of the Northumbrian.

The Sardinian again tried to buttock, but Leiper rushed him forward onto his nose. The last two falls came from positive hipping attacks from Leiper.

Andrew Carlile of Carlisle was the best all-rounder in the team as he won bronze medals in both styles. His semi-final bout with Robert Clark of Scotland in backhold was a classic demonstration of wrestling skill from two top wrestlers at the height of their powers. Clark won the first bout with a perfect hank which swirled Carlile up round and back to the mat. When the same trip came in their second hold, Carlile hooked a heel onto the hanker's standing leg and dumped him down with a back-heel. At this point Clark could have cracked, for his best ploy had been neutralised. Instead he took Carlile entirely by surprise with a cross-click from the front which left Carlile without a left leg to stand on. And then he did it again.

Of the others in the team, Richard Dixon and John Harrington did well in the backhold, but were edged out from the semi-finals by the narrowest of margins. Alan Walton of Haltwhistle unfortunately sustained an injury in the Gouren on the first day which prevented him from wrestling in his own style on the second day.

Best wrestler of all in a high quality championship was a Breton well known in Cumbria. Matthieu le Dour won the Gouren 81kg final after four seconds with a Lamm, a rare perfect throw.

20th May 2005

SEASON SET TO START AT SEDBURGH

CALLING all wrestlers. Find your deep tread socks, start thinking of hipes and hanks, get warmed up.

The wrestling season starts tomorrow at Sedbergh Gala, and for Young Farmers in the South of the county at their Field Day at Brough Sowerby, near Kirkby Stephen.

The crowded mats and regular wrestling for youngsters at Kendal, Milnthorpe, Waberthwaite and Carlisle Academies throughout the Winter needs to be translated into action on the grass in the 60 wrestling events which will take place between now and the end of October in the four Northern counties of England and the Borders of Scotland.

One of the reasons that wrestling seems to depend on family connections is that they make the effort to reach the competitions on a regular basis; whereas some youngsters who shine on the mats in Winter, never compete on grass.

The CWWA does try to encourage regular attendance by awarding trophies for points won throughout the season at under 12, 15 and 18 years, and 111/2st, 13st and All Weights. Likewise the Lakeland Sports Promoters trophy is usually the reward for good performances at several of their affiliated events.

Another initiative to boost entries this year sees Governing Board Members taking responsibility to liaise with wrestlers and events to encourage participation.

"Hello, Tony, how ye gaan on?" said the voice on the phone, so I didn't have to be a detective to know that I was listening to a Northumbrian who had known me for 45 years when that was my name.

Jimmy Pringle of Rothbury, the main man for wrestling in Northumberland, has only just come out of hospital where he has had heart by-pass surgery, and here he was organising the wrestling at Morpeth Fair on June 12.

Jimmy knows that attractive weights and good prize-money are needed to attract wrestlers, and once more he has come up with the goods.

With the weights he has been kind to the wrestlers in the early season by adding half a stone to the usual weights in case the dieting has not been going too well. And he has negotiated £800 of prize-money, which for a small event is admirable.

One curiosity which has arisen is the different perception of wrestling at the two YFC Field Days scheduled for the next two week-ends.

I have not noticed that girls and women are noticeably more fragile in the South of Cumbria, but unlike the Northern Area where there are two categories of Ladies Wrestling, there will be no female wrestling in the South - for safety reasons.

DATES

Saturday, May 21, 11.30am Cumbrian YFC Southern Area Field Day, Brough Sowerby; 1.55pm Sedbergh Gala U12/U15/U18/121/2/AW

Saturday, May 28: Cumbrian YFC Northern Area Field Day, Burgh by Sands

Monday, May 30, 1.30pm: Northumberland Show, Corbridge U12/U14/U18/111/2/131/2/AW

Thursday, June 2, 7pm: Killington Sports U12/U15/GirlsU16/13/AW

Sunday, June 5: Carlisle Vintage Society, Brisco U12/U15 Ch'ship/U18/121/2/AW

Sunday, June 12: 2pm Morpeth Fair (£800) U12/U15/U18/111/2/131/2/151/2/AW

27th May 2005

MASON GETS THE NOD

WRESTLERS from the academies at Kendal, Milnthorpe and Carlisle met on the grass at Sedbergh Gala to open the new season. The first winner was Stuart Mason of Milnthorpe who felled the latest Brocklebank, Scott, in the final of the Under 12 Years.

Graham Brocklebank of Warton has only few more weeks to compete in the Under 15 Years, and he made the most of it, felling Watchai Noimai of Anthorn in the final.

Brocklebank is big, strong, experienced and skilful, so his success was not unexpected. And in the absence of senior middleweights which are rarer than hens' teeth in the south of the county, he went on winning until the heavyweights trundled into action.

Luckily for him the Under 15 Years Championship is early in the wrestling calendar this year, being held at the Carlisle Vintage Society's Rally at Brisco Farm, Carlisle on Sunday, June 5, so he should be an overwhelming favourite to win; except that there is a family christening which could fell him before can take part.

The Kendal area is well stocked with substantial wrestlers well able to take on all-comers. The entry at Sedbergh would have made an impressive tug-o'-war team, but they were considerably more mobile than that. Thomas Brocklebank, Andrew Bentham, John Wilson, Trevor Hodgson and Joseph Robson pointed the difference between men and boys as they locked horns.

Top of this mighty pile was Joseph Robson, the 14st Champion at the recent European Championships. He found the Kendal coach, John Wilson, a handful as Wilson strove to buttock. That ploy worked once, but Robson gained the decider.

Hodgson won the final.

Results - Sedbergh Gala: Under 12 Years 1, S Mason; 2, S Brocklebank; 3, B Brocklebank. Under 15 Years 1 G Brocklebank; 2, W Noimai; 3, T Mason. Under 18 Years 1, G Brocklebank; 2, T Mason; 3, S Knight. 12½st 1, G Brocklebank; 2, W Noimai; 3, D Parsons. All Weights 1, J Robson; 2, T Hodgson; 3, A Bentham.

Dates - Sat, May 28: Cumbrian YFC Northern Area Field Day, Burgh by Sands. Mon, May 30: 1.30pm Northumberland Show, Corbridge U12/U14/U18/11½st/13½st/AW. Thurs, June 2: 7pm Killington Sports U12/U15/GirlsU16/13/AW. Sun, June 5: Carlisle Vintage Society, Brisco U12/U15 Ch'ship/U18/121/2/AW. Sun, June 12: 2pm Morpeth Fair (£800) U12/U15/U18/111/2/131/2/151/2/AW

3rd June 2005

CARLISLE PROVIDES FIRST FIVE WINNERS

Wrestlers made a profitable sally through the Tyne Gap to the Northumberland County Show at Corbridge. The first five winners were all from Carlisle Wrestling Club, but the Northumbrians had the final say when two of them wrestled out the final of the All Weights.

Twelve years have elapsed since Darren Whitfield, of Rothbury, won his third 14st Championship in a row, and he is several stones heavier now. He met the present Under 18 Champion, the massive Richard Younger, of Ponteland, and promptly lost the first fall to some quick twists.

At this point he found salvation in his old skills from lighter days, hiping Younger onto one leg and then finishing him with a twist to equalise. The decider was won with a counter attack.

As Younger came steam-rolling in with a back-heel, Whitfield stepped aside, helped him on his way and twisted to the ground.

Training partners Andrew Carlile and David Atkinson were both on sparkling form to win the lightweights and middleweights respectively.

Such form could be expected from Carlile who trained hard for the recent European Championships where he won two bronze medals, but Atkinson has had to sharpen up by reading legal case law on his university course at Newcastle.

John Harrington, of Bewaldeth, was in both finals, and gained a fall in both, but was just short of match practice to be at his sharpest.

Another Harrington, Joe, scored his first win of the season on his first outing. Taller, stronger and faster after a winter of rugby training, he made easy work of the younger and lighter Watchai Noimai, of Anthorn, in the final of the Under 18 Years.

Two brothers from Westward, Daniel and Jack Ewart, have been regulars at Carlisle Wrestling Club for some years, and it showed.

Daniel went for his trips and carried all before him to win the Under 12 Years. Jack tried to do the same in the Under 15 Years but did not quite succeed with his original intentions. Fortunately for him, Plan B was better than Plan A, and he won some excellent falls with sudden changes of direction and buttocking.

Wrestling's country connection was there for all to see at the North Cumbria YFC Field Day at Burgh by Sands.

Many of the competitors were no doubt put forward as human sacrifices to win points for their club, but there was also a high incidence of trained wrestlers with all the skills.

Best of all was Grasmere 13st Champion Richard Fox who carved his way through all the best wrestlers in the All Weights.

Lucy Armstrong won the Ladies 11st event for the second year running, Last year she won with raw talent. This year she knew rather more what she was doing, having trained at Carlisle Wrestling Club last summer.

Those special training sessions for women and girls will be held in Currock House Gym each Wednesday at 7.45pm, when Andrew Carlile will be the coach. All are welcome to attend.

RESULTS

North Cumbria YFC Field Day - 91/2st: 1, S Smith (Walton); 2, A Pigg (Wigton); 3, N Harrison (Aspatria). 111/2st: 1, John Harrington (Caldbeck); 2, R Dixon (Wigton); 3, J Whiteford (Walton). All Weights: 1, R Fox (Longtown); 2, B Norman (Drigg); 3, K Fox (Walton). Ladies: 11st 1, L Armstrong (Raughtonhead); 2, D Clark (Penrith); 3, K Linsey Kirkclinton). Ladies All Weights: 1, R Short (Brampton); 2, E Steel (Drigg); 3, J Armstrong (Longtown).

Northumberland County Show

Under 12 Years: 1, D Ewart; 2, J Brown; 3, P Murray. U-15: 1, J Ewart; 2, W Noimai; 3, G Morton. U-18: 1, Joe Harrington; 2, W Noimai; 3, J Ewart. 111/2st: 1, A Carlile; 2, John Harrington; 3, S Hamilton. 131/2st: 1, D Atkinson; 2, John Harrington; 3, S Hamilton. All Weights: 1, D Whitfield; 2, R Younger; 3, D Atkinson.

Dates

Sun, June 5 12.30pm Carlisle Vintage Society, Brisco U12/U15 Ch'ship/U18/121/2/AW

Sun June 12 2pm Morpeth Fair (£800) U12/U15/U18/111/2/131/2/151/2/AW

Sat July 18 3.30pm Kirkheaton U12/U15/U18/12/15/AW

10th June 2005

TEENAGER GRAHAM FOLLOWS IN FAMILY'S WINNING FOOTSTEPS

GRANDFATHER Wilf was a champion wrestler several times; his father, Harry, won both the 14st and Heavyweight Championship, so there was a sense of inevitability about Graham Brocklebank of Warton winning the Boys Under 15 Years Championship at Carlisle Vintage Society Rally.

Last year he was virtually unbeaten, but failed to win the top honour when Chris Walton felled him at Silloth. This year he is bigger, stronger and an even better wrestler after another winter on the Kendal Academy mats.

All the way to the final he was lifting, hiping, swinging, but Graeme Benson of Langdale, who plays rugby for Kendal, made him change his tactics by taking the first fall of the final.

Brocklebank attacked with a back-heel but Benson twisted him back and down. Plan B then came into play with Brocklebank gaining a good hold and then felling Benson off the right side, just as dad would have done 20 years ago.

Brocklebank must have been nervous about losing again as favourite, but there was no sign of that as he went for the right chip at the right time, flattening Benson with a well timed inside-click for the deciding fall.

Carlisle wrestlers dominated the men's event, with David Barnes, Andrew Carlile, David Atkinson and John Harrington all giving a good show of clever wrestling. John Harrington of Bewaldeth found the extra ounce and inch to fell Andrew Carlile in the final of the 12½ stones for his first win of the season, and would be especially pleased with a neat outside-hipe from a standing start which won the decider in a three fall final.

David Atkinson of Carlisle went down in the semi-finals of the middleweights, but in typical resilient fashion, found the extra needed to win the All Weights with panache.

Killington Sports wove its magic again with its unfeasibly hilly field: Hordes of girls, boys, men and women charged up hills and round the parked cars and occasionally down the home straight. They threw eggs, collected taties, raced in sacks or with tied ankles, battered each other with pillows... and wrestled furiously.

Tracy Hodgson woke up after being dumped down in the mire by Emily Postlethwaite for the first fall of the Girls final to win the next two. The scales sank into the ground as the men weighed for the 13 stones, but the conditions did nothing to hamper the quality of the wrestling. One fall in particular stands out when John Wilson looked to have David Atkinson dead and buried with his head tightly clamped and close to the ground, just waiting for the final killer buttock.

Instead, Atkinson burrowed under his man, arched his back and threw him low over his right shoulder for a clear but close win. Ironically, the effect of that fall was nullified when Wilson won the next two. Then he was felled in turn by Andrew Carlile.

The final say went to Joseph Robson of Grayrigg, who had to improvise to shake off John Harrington's hank by inside hiping and then changing to an outside-hipe in mid air.

Results: Killington Sports

Girls Under 16 1, T Hodgson; 2, E Postlethwaite; 3, C Musgrove.

Under 12 Years 1, S Brocklebank; 2, S Mason; 3, B Brocklebank.

Under 15 Years 1, G Brocklebank; 2, S Wilkinson; 3, J Ewart.

13st 1, D Atkinson; 2, D Parsons; 3, A Carlile.

All Weights 1, J Robson; 2, John Harrington; 3, A Carlile.

17th June 2005

HONOURS SHARED AROUND

TWO events over the last weekend produced no fewer than 10 different winners with only Watchai Noimai and John Harrington managing to secure a brace of wins.

The Roman Wall Show on Saturday struggled for entries although this did not diminish the quality of the wrestling.

Watchai Noimai, of Anthorn, is in only his second season on the grass but he is already making his mark with the standard of his wrestling, and has determination in abundance. His pair of Under 15s wins were both achieved against significantly heavier opposition and at Roman Wall he was awarded the prize for the best performance.

John Harrington has been producing class performances for some time so it is easy to forget he is still only 18. A comfortable win on Saturday, despite losing a fall to Johnjo Pattinson, was only the prelude for a more spectacular performance on Sunday.

A second win at 11½ stones, against his old foe Andrew Carlile, came courtesy of an outside hipe for the first fall and a hank for the second.

Although he did not win any further classes he left his mark on the proceedings. Robert Thomlinson calling in at Morpeth after a weekend at Berwick, found to his cost that Harrington is never beaten until he is flat out on the turf, and Jason Davidson had to call on all his experience after finding himself on the wrong end of a leg up buttock.

Despite a state of exhaustion, Davidson was able to overcome the determination of Mark Lowery and had far too much experience in the final of the 15½ stones for David Barnes, who himself had taken the head prize in the 13½ stones at the expense of John Harrington.

The action continues in the North East this weekend at Kirkheaton Show before it returns to the Lake District next week with the annual Patterdale Dog Show.

RESULTS

Roman Wall Show: U13: 1, D Ewart; 2, J Brown; 3, R Palmer.

U15: 1, W Noimai; 2, D Ewart; 3, J Ewart.

11½ stones: 1, D Whitfield; 2, J Davidson; 3, John Harrington.

Morpeth: U12: L Harrison; 2, D Sayer; 3, W Ainsley.

U15: 1, W Noimai; 2, a Brown; 3, M Harrington.

U18: 1, Joe Harrington; 2, S O'Brian; 3, R Dixon.

11½ stones: 1, John Harrington; 2, A Carlile; 3, S Hamilton.

13½ stones: 1, D Barnes; 2, John Harrington; 3, A Carlile.

15½ stones: 1, J Davidson; 2, D Barnes; 3, M Lowery.

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

1st July 2005

YOUNG BENSON ON HIGH AFTER DOUBLE SUCCESS AT PATERDALE

PATERDALE had its share of low flying when the Parachute Regiment dropped onto the cricket pitch, a Hercules transport plane trundled by just above our heads before turning right for Pooley Bridge, and a yellow helicopter bared its belly as it passed low over the wrestling ring where Graeme Benson of Langdale was flying higher than ever before by winning both the Under 15 and Under 18 years wrestling.

He is a big lad – a rugby player at Kendal – so his win against Sam Wilkinson was not unexpected, even though he lost the first when a knee touched before he completed the throw.

But his win in the older age group against the skilful and equally big Joe Harrington was a surprise.

Harrington struck first with a twist over the knee, but Benson struck back with two decisive chips: firstly, a throw borrowed from freestyle wrestling – the salto – where he fell back and threw his opponent over his right shoulder.

Then for the decider he went for a back-heel which chopped Harrington's leg out.

Another high-flyer was David Atkinson who won both at 13st and All Weights. The double champion was on his best form, though pushed hard by Andrew Carlile, David Barnes and John Harrington.

In the final of the 13st he had to depart from his usual pattern and mix it with David Barnes of Dearham. My notes for the final fall say 'heads out...in...buttock...twist back.' The All Weights final with Andrew Carlile was simpler: 'inside hipe....ditto'. What that meant was that Atkinson went for his trademark favourite chip, his version of an inside hipe which is akin to a right-leg cross-buttock executed in mid air, twice.

John Harrington had a tasty victory in the 11½ stones when he jumped ahead of Andrew Carlile's swinging hipes, landed and then twisted to win. And right at the beginning, Jack Ewart once more showed that he is the lad to beat at Under 12 Years.

The coming weekend has two new venues – Alston Gala and the West Cumbria Vintage Club at Distington. A long established meeting at Chapel Stile, Langdale, has asked wrestlers to wear the traditional strip if possible.

Results:

Patterdale Country Fair

Under 12 Years: 1, J Ewart; 2, J Brown; 3, S Lashley.

Under 15 Years: 1, G Benson; 2, S Wilkinson; 3, D Parsons.

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

11½st: 1, John Harrington; 2, A Carlile; 3, G Benson.

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

All Weights: 1, D Atkinson; 2, A Carlile; 3, John Harrington

Dates:

Tomorrow: 3pm Alston Gala U12/U15/U18/11½/13/AW

Sunday: 1.30pm West Cumbria Vintage Club, Distington U15/U18/12½/2/AW; 2pm Langdale Gala (traditional strip requested)

8th July 2005

BROCKLEBANK TAKES TITLE

TWO new events on the wrestling calendar last week, at Alston and Distington, attracted good entries of youngsters but were sparsely attended by senior wrestlers.

That theme was even more pronounced at the older established event Langdale Gala where there was no-one over 18 years of age.

Nevertheless a good crowd at Chapel Stile, Langdale, was treated to some excellent competitive wrestling thanks to the extended Brocklebank family from Kendal Academy and a big turn-out from Milnthorpe Academy.

The most complete wrestler on display was the under-15 champion, Graham Brocklebank, who hiped when he could, and inside-clicked when the pressure was on.

His main opposition came from Graeme Benson, a local Langdale wrestler who has started travelling further afield this year.

Benson began well in the series of bouts during the afternoon by back-heeling Brocklebank, but after that promising start he found himself outfoxed particularly by some smart inside-clicks from Brocklebank.

Alston Gala had a great time with the wrestling. Appropriately, it was sponsored by the local fitness club, for entries were good and the action intense.

Most highly charged and exhausting of all, as they toured the ring, was the women's wrestling, won by Donna Thompson.

The locals gave a good account of themselves throughout, but the main feature of the afternoon was a series of bouts between Richard Walton of Haltwhistle and Joe Harrington of Kirkbampton.

Walton struck first in the Under 18s final, but Harrington hit back in the 13st semi-finals, only to find that he had Richard's dad, Alan, to contend with in the final.

Then in the All Weights Richard Walton turned the tables on Harrington once again.

All five winners at Distington live on the Cumberland coastal strip, yet learned their wrestling at the Carlisle Club.

In winter, Paul Murray of Arlecdon travels the 40 miles to Carlisle Wrestling Club each week for training so his win in the Under 12s at Distington, which is virtually in his back yard, was well deserved.

Thai born Watchai Noimai of Anthorn who has competed widely this season, took the under 15s and wrestled up in the next two finals with a selection of Harringtons: Joe in the under 18s and John in the 12½ stones.

RESULTS

Alston Gala

Under 12 Years 1, D Ewart; 2, R Meir; 3, J Brown.

Under 15 Years 1, O Harrison; 2, O Cartwright; 3, J Meir.

Under 18 Years 1, R Walton; 2, Joe Harrington; 3, O Cartwright.

111/2st 1, R Walton; 2, M Collins; 3, O Cartwright.

13st 1, A Walton; 2, Joe Harrington; 3, R Walton.

All Weights 1, R Walton; 2, Joe Harrington; 3, L McVey

Ladies 1, D Thompson; 2, H Ridley; 3, N Richardson.

Distington (West Cumbria Vintage Club)

Under 12 Years 1, P Murray; 2, O Clark; 3, A Chorley.

Under 15 Years 1, W Noimai; 2, M Harrington; 3, P Murray.

Under 18 Years 1, Joe Harrington; 2, W Noimai; 3, M Harrington.

12½ st 1, John Harrington; 2, W Noimai; 3, D Scott.

All Weights 1, D Barnes; 2, John Harrington; 3, C Askew.

Langdale Gala

Under 12 Years 1, S Mason; 2, D Ewart; 3, B Brocklebank.

Under 15 Years 1, G Benson; 2, T Mason; 3, S Wilkinson.

Under 18 Years 1, G Brocklebank; David Parsons; 3, G Benson.

11st 1, G Brocklebank; 2, S Wilkinson; 3, David Parsons.

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

All Weights 1, G Benson; 2, S Brocklebank; 3, David Parsons

Best Wrestling Strip: B Brocklebank.

15th July 2005

TRADITIONALISTS TEAR A STRIP OFF CHANGES

WHEN the Wrestling Association decided to allow competitors to wear athletic costume other than a traditional wrestling strip for senior championships, it provoked a national media reaction.

Now that the season is well under way, spectators and old wrestlers in ringside conversation have almost unanimously expressed regret at the change, but they often believed that the traditional strip had been banned, which is certainly not the case.

On the other hand, more wrestlers seem to be wrestling in shorts than before, and two wrestlers from Kendal and Milnthorpe (David Parsons and Sam Wilkinson) have been wrestling in kit provided by governing board chairman Jim Bland, who favours change. That strip consists of fairly tight running gear, leggings which are usually called "Ron Hills", and a modern athletic vest.

This strip is neat and practical and not a million miles away from the wrestling gear worn in the first half of the 19th century!

In fact, the first time the new rules can have any direct effect is in the next two days when there are two senior championships. Another test will come at Ambleside Sports when "The Michael Berry Wrestling Programme" includes the All Weights Championship.

The late Michael Berry was a great supporter of wrestling and of the traditional strip. Accordingly, there will be a substantial prize for the best wrestling strip. "Costume preferred" is the enjoinder to the wrestlers.

Officially, no wrestling took place last week, but if you were at Plumbland School, near Aspatria, you would have disagreed. All sorts and ages of youngsters and parents (and the odd grandparent) got into their stocking-feet to hev a hod. Sometimes they knew the rules and sometimes they didn't, but who cares? The whole occasion was a lively comedy from beginning to end - the best sort of grass-roots wrestling.

The serious stuff begins again with two championships in two days this weekend: Joseph Robson defends his 14th title at the Cumberland Show and John Harrington is due at Great Ecclestone Show on Sunday to try to retain the huge 11th Championship trophy that was first awarded in 1906.

22nd July 2005

ROBSON CELEBRATES THIRD SILVER BELT SUCCESS IN A ROW

TWO wrestlers reinforced their growing reputations by retaining their championship titles for another year.

Joseph Robson won the 14 stones at the Cumberland Show, and John Harrington the 11 stones at Great Ecclestone Show.

The two finalists in the 14 stones both hipped their way through the rounds. Robson would lean into his man, ease him into the air and then twist to win.

David Atkinson would bend his knees, go low in for hold, then hoist his opponent high in the air on chest and leg before turning him in mid-air. For the final something had to give, and in the event each fall went to a counter to the hipe. Robson struck first with a cross buttock as Atkinson came up close to hipe.

Then, when Robson tried the hipe in the second hold, Atkinson landed on balance and twisted on to take the fall.

The decider saw Atkinson go for his favourite chip again, but Robson swamped him with his chest as the Carlisle wrestler leaned back to lift.

Robson, who won the European 90kg Championship in Brittany earlier in the year, has now won the silver belt three times in succession and four times in all.

Two of the closest matched wrestlers met in the final of the 11th championship at Great Ecclestone Show – John Harrington, the holder, and Andrew Carlile, the former champion.

Carlile had the upper hand at the beginning of the season, but latterly Harrington has been coming out on top when they meet. For the first fall Carlile turned in and Harrington twisted him back. For the second decisive fall Harrington went for the outside hipe and Carlile had no answer.

The wrestling at the Cumberland Show was some of the most competitive of the season so far, with Richard Fox taking the 12 stones cup, and the Guinness Trophy for the best performance, after a dynamic display of attacking purposeful wrestling.

Alan Jones, in his third year of failing to retire, lost out to youth in the 14 stones first round when John Harrington legged him up for the decider, but he reasserted himself in the All Weights before he lost out to weight in the final with the Northumbrian Heavyweight Darren Whitfield.

At Great Ecclestone Show David Barnes showed his growing competence when he felled Adam Threlfall in the final of the 14 stones, but the Threlfall family had the last word when cousins Joe and Chris wrestled out the All Weights final after an excellent heavyweight competition.

A face from the past made a welcome return to the ring at Carlisle and Great Ecclestone. Royal Engineer Russell Ellwood, on leave from Afghanistan and Bosnia, intends to take part in as many events as possible in the next six weeks.

The third event of the week-end might well have been a thin do because it clashed with the 11th Championship, but Haltwhistle Carnival had a good base of local boy wrestlers from the South Tyne Valley, enhanced by some enthusiastic novice wrestlers.

Darren Whitfield won his second heavyweight final in two days.

Results: Cumberland Show

Under 12: 1, D Ewart; 2, J Brown; 3, P Murray.

Under 15: 1, G Benson; 2, J Ewart; 3, D Ewart.

Under 18: 1, R Dixon; 2, Joe Harrington; 3, C Potts.

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

14st: World Championship 1, J Robson; 2, D Atkinson; 3, D Barnes.

All Weights: 1, D Whitfield; 2, A Jones; 3, J Wharton.

Great Ecclestone Show

Under 12: 1, S Mason; 2, B Brocklebank; 3, S Brocklebank.

Under 15: 1, S Wilkinson; 2, S Brocklebank; 3, D Parsons.

Under 18: 1, G Brocklebank; 2, L Derbyshire; 3, D Parsons.

11st: Championship 1, John Harrington; 2, A Carlile; 3, G Brocklebank.

14st: 1, D Barnes; 2, A Threlfall; 3, P Barnes.

All Weights: 1, Joe Threlfall; 2, R Threlfall; 3, R Ellwood.

5th August 2005

MCNAMARA'S TITLE FOR NINTH SUCCESSIVE YEAR

IN MANY ways Cumberland and Westmorland wrestling had one of its best weeks for many a long day with good entries in all the five events packed into a busy four days.

The heavyweight championship at Ambleside attracted the best entry for years; six Breton wrestlers added spice and the unexpected wherever they travelled; the standard of wrestling was high throughout; big enthusiastic crowds circled the rings (except for soggy Ambleside) and Robert McNamara won the Heavyweight Championship with imperious power for the ninth year in a row.

But it was also became the worst of weeks when double champion, David Atkinson sustained a double break to his left leg during the Heavyweight Championship.

David Atkinson represents all that is best in our sport: spectacular skill, steely determination, physical fitness, sportsmanship of the highest order.

In the ring his clean attacking style has made him wrestling's chief asset. Outside the ring he gives so much back to the sport with his positive attitude. He was one of the first CWWA qualified coaches and shone throughout his assessment. All we can hope is that he will make a full and speedy recovery.

The Heavyweight Championship at Ambleside deserved a big crowd, but the wind and rain put paid to that.

Twenty-two men were lined up against Big Mac, Robert McNamara, as he sought to equal the great Ted Duglinson's nine championship wins.

Martin McLaughlin of Meathop is a big lad and good wrestler, as is Thomas Brocklebank of Warton, Nicolas Gournec from Brittany, Joe Threlfall of Preston and finally Richard Younger of Ponteland, but all came to nothing as the Scot hoisted each of them in turn high into the air on his chest, before twisting them and plunging them to the earth.

In a four hour programme of wrestling the standard never slipped, so the Breton Matthieu Le Dour's nomination as the Guinness Trophy winner for the best performance in all the wrestling was a handsome compliment to his wrestling skills in an alien style.

RESULTS

Ambleside Sports

Under 12 Years 1, S Brocklebank; 2, P Cowell; 3, D Ewart.

Under 15 Years 1, G Benson; 2, W Noimai; 3, F Healey.

Under 18 Years 1, R Dixon; 2, R Walton; 3, W Noimai.

11½st 1, A Carlile; 2, R Fox; 3, L Boucher.

12½st 1, D Atkinson; 2, R Fox; 3, A Carlile. 14st 1, M Le Dour; 2, J Wilson; 3, Y Salaun.

All Weights World Championship 1, R McNamara; 2, R Younger; 3, Joe Threlfall

Guinness Trophy winner: M Le Dour

Langholm Common Riding

Under 12 Years 1, D Ewart; 2, A Little; 3, J Brown.

Under 16 Years 1, W Noimai; 2, J Ewart; 3, F Healey.

11st 1 A Carlile; 2, L Boucher; 2, Y Meuric.

13st 1, M Le Dour; 2, L Boucher; 3, Joe Harrington.

All Weights 1, A Carlile; 2, R Leiper; 3, M Le Dour

Cockermouth Show

Under 12 Years 1, D Ewart; 2, L McAvoy; 3, M Henson.

Under 15 Years 1, W Noimai; 2, J Dowsett; 3, J Ewart.

Under 18 Years 1, Joe Harrington; 2, W Noimai; 3, R Dixon

11/2st 1, John Harrington; 2, P Barnes; 3, A Carlile.

13½st 1, D Barnes; 2, Y Salaun; 3, M Le Dour.

All Weights 1, C Clark; 2, M Le Dour; 3, Y Salaun

Beetham Sports

Girls 1, T Hodgson; 2, C Hodgson; 3, H Hodgson.

Under 12 Years 1, S Mason; 2, W Hayhurst; 3, S Brocklebank.

Under 14 Years 1, F Healey; 2, Douglas Parsons; 3, B Brocklebank.

Under 16 Years 1, G Brocklebank; 2, K O'Neill; 3, Douglas Parsons.

Under 18 Years 1, David Parsons; 2, G Brocklebank; 3, S Wilkinson.

12½ 1, Brocklebank; 2, David Parsons; 3, S Wilkinson.

All Weights 1, J Wilson; 2, T Brocklebank; 3, M McLaughlin.

Flookburgh

Under 12 Years 1, S Brocklebank; 2, S Mason; 3, B Brocklebank.

Under 15 Years 1, S Wilkinson; 2, S Mason; 3, Douglas Parsons.

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

11st 1, A Carlile; 2, G Brocklebank; 3, S Mason.

13st 1 John Harrington; 2, Andrew Carlile; 3, G Brocklebank.

All Weights 1, M Le Dour; 2, John Harrington; 3, T Brocklebank.

12th August 2005

YOUNGSTERS SET STANDARDS AT LOWTHER SHOW

THERE were lots of goods on display at Lowther Horse Trials: good crowd, good prize-money, good weather and good wrestling.

Once more the youngsters and the lightweight wrestlers set the standards. Last year Richard Fox seemed to lose steam after his great win in the 13 stones at Grasmere.

This year his skills are backed by that extra ounce of power and determination which makes all the difference in wrestling.

In the final of the 12 stones he won the first fall against his old (young) rival, John Harrington with a conventional back-heel.

Harrington took the next fall with an outside-hipe, and then Fox clinched it with his own speciality: a slow right-leg back-heel applied by locking himself into position and boring down on his opponent till he hits the grass.

Alan Walton then came into his own. It is no secret that he has a gammy knee, and that put paid to his chances in the 12 stones when he had to give in or risk injury.

In the 14 stones, however, he was unstoppable, wrestling with his usual care, but striking briskly when a chance appeared. With the leg-ups and twists and back-heels he cast away the years and came out on top.

A polisher of horse brasses won the All Weights. Duncan "Crazy Horse" Hutton, ex-heavyweight champion, had come for a quiet day as support staff for a horse and carriage, but whether it was my suggestion that he must be getting a bit old for the wrestling, or that he saw nothing to frighten him in the ring, he entered the lists late in the day and went on to win.

In wrestling it does help, of course, if you are built like a light-house.

This light-house, though, knows how to wrestle and he won against his fellow Northumbrian lighthouse, Darren Whitfield, with two massive back-heels that would have cowped a JCB.

Darren Whitfield had been runner-up the previous day, too, at Powburn when the heavyweight bout which we all anticipated at Ambleside took place in the final.

Rab McNamara is the unbeaten heavyweight world champion, and he proved it again.

Jimmy Pringle, spry again after his heart operation, thought he had a disaster on his hands when the wrestling was due to start, but the local lads entered in droves, the Scots arrived, eventually, and Jimmy enjoyed "one o' the best days ivvor".

A lad called Gallan, from Jedburgh, especially caught his eye with his natural skills and zest as he buttocked his way to winning the 14 stones.

RESULTS

Powburn Show

U-10 Years: 1, E Harrison; 2, E Charlton; 3, R Siddall.

U-13: 1, I McGonagal; 2, J Brown; 3, C Harrison.

U-16: 1, A Ord; 2, M Pearce; 3, J Oliver.

11 1/2st: 1, A Ord; 2, C Gallan; 3, J Oliver.

14st: 1, C Gallan; 2, R Cockburn; 3, M Telfer.

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

Lowther Horse Trials

U-12: 1, S Brocklebank; 2, B Brocklebank; 3, D Ewart.

U-15: 1, G Benson; 2, F Healey; 3, S Wilkinson.

U-18: 1, R Dixon; 2, S Wilkinson; 3, Joe Harrington.

Women's Open: 1, T Hodgson; 2, L Armstrong; 3, C Hodgson.

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

14st: 1, A Walton; 2, John Harrington; 3, R Dixon.

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

19th August 2005

SEASON'S WRESTLING TITLES STILL UP FOR GRABS

IN CUMBERLAND and Westmorland this year no-one knows who is going to win what. First one wrestler than another hits form or has an off day and no pattern of results emerges.

The Under 18 Years Championship at Dalston was a case in point when, for the first time in years there was no firm favourite although three of the most likely lads, Richard Walton, Joe Harrington and Richard Dixon, ended up in the semi-finals.

Not surprisingly, the final bouts were closely fought. When Richard Dixon felled Richard Walton in the semi-final that closeness meant three bouts of close intensive action with hanks and buttocks and leg-ups and lifts.

The closeness of the final between Richard Dixon of Lessonhall and Joe Harrington of Kirkbampton produced stalemate.

The first bout was lengthy and ended with Dixon winning by a short head as they sprawled forward from a leg-up buttock.

The last bout went on for ever as Dixon turned in and gained control of Harrington's head. Occasionally, Harrington fought free and lifted Dixon, but could not turn him. In the end Dixon won with a twist over the knee.

Another Championship was settled the following day when Forestburngate in Northumberland hosted the 15 Stones Championship. Despite good prize-money and excellent entries in the rest of the wrestling programme, there were only five competitors in the Championship.

One far-travelled main contender, Trevor Hodgson, was felled by the weighing scales before the event began, and it was left to two Northumbrian cousins, Keith Younger and Robert Leiper to contest the final. Leiper, the more experienced of the two, hiped twice to win.

In a week-end of excellent wrestling, the outstanding performance for me was Richard Fox's double win at Gilsland Show.

Every bout was alive with action as he buttocked and back-heeled his way through the opposition.

Results

Dalston Show

Under 12 years: 1, J Brown; 2, D Miller; 3, M McBratney.

Under 15 years: 1, G Benson; 2, W Noimai; 3, S Wilkinson.

Under 18 years Championship: 1, R Dixon; 2, Joe Harrington; 3, R Walton.

11½st: 1, J Harrington; 2, R Fox; 3, R Dixon.

13st: 1, A Carlile; 2, A Walton; 3, G Benson.

All Weights: 1, John Harrington; 2, A Carlile; 3, A Walton.

Gilsland Show

Under 13 years: 1, S Mark; 2, C Ridley; 3, J Raine.

Under 17 years: 1, R Walton; 2, W Noimai; 3, F Healey.

11½st: 1, R Fox; 2, R Walton; 3, A Carlile.

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

Forestburngate

Under 10 years: 1, J Ferguson; 2, J Walton; 3, G Crane.

Under 13 years: 1, J Hodgson; 2, D Crane; 3, J Brown.

Under 15 years: 1, T Hodgson; 2, J Ferguson; 3, F Healey.

Under 18 years: 1, R Walton; 2, C Davies; 3, W Noimai.

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

15st Championship: 1, R Leiper; 2, K Younger; 3, John Harrington.

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

2nd September 2005

TRIUMPHANT TRACY'S SIX OF THE BEST IN ACTION-PACKED WEEKEND

HOW do you best sum up in a few paragraphs six wrestling events with 46 age and weight categories and which totalled 15 hours of action?

The statistics shows that several wrestlers had double wins, and that Watchai Noimai, Richard Dixon and Joe Threlfall had three wins.

John Harrington had five and most prolific of all was Tracy Hodgson of Dent, who had the weekend of her life winning twice each day for a total of six wins.

Two Icelandic sisters, Solveig and Svana Johannsdottirs, took first and second prizes in the Ladies Open at Grasmere, making it Tracy's only failure in a remarkable weekend.

The chronological approach reveals that on the Saturday wrestlers were split between the north and south of the county.

The main event was the 13st Championship held at Millom and Broughton Show, so several of the northern wrestlers travelled to unknown territory to compete.

The journey from Northumberland proved especially fruitful for Alan Walton, now in an Indian Summer of wrestling form, who felled Alan Jones in the final.

"He was too strong for me", said Jones. "I couldn't get to him".

Walton struck first with a back-heel and then took the second with a twist.

Meanwhile, a car load of Icelanders and a minibus full of Scots added to the fun at the Holm Show in Liddesdale and afterwards at Bellingham Show. The star performer was John Taylor of Yoker in Glasgow, who gave a glimpse of the dynamic wrestling that proved so successful at Grasmere the following day.

Bellingham Show had one of those special sessions when serious wrestling blended with fun as a throng of wrestlers who only ever wrestle at the one event came out of the crowd to compete.

Josef Stefansson's long and expensive journey from Iceland was made worthwhile for him when he took the biggest scalp in wrestling, felling Robert McNamara, the nine times heavyweight champion. To be fair to Rab, he was wrestling with an injury, and Bellingham was a try-out before Grasmere where he remained a spectator.

Grasmere Sports had the worst of the weather and the best of the wrestling.

Joe Harrington had a great day winning the Under 18 Years with such style that Max Carlyle awarded him the Guinness Trophy for the best performance in all the wrestling.

Richard Dixon did his usual trick when he loses in his age category by going on to win the 12 stones title instead.

The new 13st Champion, Alan Walton, reached two finals but was beaten by a Scottish wrestler in each. And a Rugby League player from Manchester, James Atkins, took some surprising scalps with his unorthodox and untrained attacks. Joe Threlfall won the All Weights title which he first won in 1984 at the age of 21.

Silloth and Keswick had the weather and the crowds that Grasmere lacked. The closely fought and unpredictable wrestling between John Harrington, Richard Dixon, Joe Harrington and Richard Walton continued unabated with each wrestler gaining success. Joe Threlfall had two more wins but lost a few individual falls on the way.

The what-I-remember-best approach takes me to two bouts at Grasmere.

A remarkably good crowd under their umbrellas were entertained by good sport throughout the day, but on two occasions especially the electricity of the wrestling lit up the dull day.

Joe Harrington and Graham Brocklebank wrestled their hearts out in the final of the Under 18 Years. First Brocklebank went ahead with a buttock, only for Harrington to equalise with an inside-hipe. That set up the decider which thrilled the crowd before Harrington's hipe came into play again to settle the matter.

And absolutely best of all, even though it ended in anti-climax when John Harrington broke his hold, was the bout between him and John Taylor. I have rarely seen such a level of intensity as the two wrestlers flew at each other with skill.

They went from one side to the other, hiped and buttocked and twisted incessantly without getting the killer blow, until it all ended tamely with that broken hold.

9th September 2005

LOCAL SHOW BOYS DO BATTLE

THIS is the season of mists, mellow fruitfulness and lots of local agricultural shows, six in a space of five days. And in the last days of summer freedom hosts of boys entered for wrestling, 20 at Ennerdale and even more at Hesketh Newmarket.

The local lads generated extra excitement in each round, but the winners were usually the far travellers, Jack Brown from Haydon Bridge, Joe Thompson from Alston, the Ewart brothers from Westward, Watchai Noimai from Anthorn.

Ennerdale was buzzing with anticipation until the rain came. The crowd dwindled but the wrestlers remained to give a good account of themselves, with Carlisle Academy wrestlers winning everything, except the Ladies' event, even though remote West Cumbrian fellside where the wrestling took place is a world away from the city.

Grayrigg Show was triumph for the inter-related Hodgson/Brocklebank family. Uncle Trevor Hodgson met two Brocklebank nephews in successive finals. He went down to Thomas in the 15 stones but felled Graham in the All Weights.

Scott Brocklebank had set the ball rolling by winning the under-12 Years, and cousin Graham then won three categories.

Only Sam Wilkinson broke the family monopoly when he felled Scott Brocklebank in the final of the under-15s. Heavyweight, Joe Threlfall might have done the same but he thought it was an evening event and arrived to an empty showfield.

The Brocklebanks were out in force at Lowick Show two days later and took home most of the prize-money.

At Harbottle and Hesketh Newmarket previously unknown wrestlers made their mark.

And at Hesketh Stuart Foster of Sebergham won at both Under 18 Years and the Novices. At Harbottle Jimmy Pringle was impressed by the debut of Garth Deardon, 'A right tall lad, blond, always twisting and trying'.

Simon Hamilton, who was a Novice wrestler until winning at Bellingham Show the previous week, won again at Harbottle, and he was given a silver cup to prove it.

The most serious and professional wrestling of the week took place at Wolsingham Show which gives some of the best prize-money on the circuit.

The intense competition between Andrew Carlile and John Harrington continued unabated with Carlile taking the honours in the 11 stones and Harrington in the 12 stones.

RESULTS

Ennerdale Show

Under-12: 1, D Ewart; 2, J Thompson; 3, J Brown.

Under-15: 1, J Ewart; 2, W Noimai; 3, H Chapman.

Under-18 : 1, Joe Harrington; 2, H Chapman; 3, W Noimai. Ladies: 1, D Thompson; 2, S Styles; 3, L Murray.

12½st: 1, P Barnes; 2, J Ewart; 3, G Kenyon.

All Weights: 1, C Clark; 2, Joe Harrington; 3, P Barnes.

Grayrigg Show

Under-12: 1, S Brocklebank; 2, J Thompson; 3, D Hodgson.

Under-15: 1, S Wilkinson; 2, S Brocklebank; 3, C Proctor.

Under-18: 1, G Brocklebank; 2, S Wilkinson; 3, A Thompson.

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

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

13st: 1, G Brocklebank; 2, D Lawrence; 3, S Wilkinson.

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

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

Hesket Newmarket Show

Under-12: 1, D Ewart; 2, B Wild; 3, J Howard.

Under-15: 1, W Noimai; 2, J Ewart; 3, W Wilson.

Under-18: 1, S Foster; 2, M Harrington; 3, J Ewart.

Novices: 1, S Foster; 2, J Ewart; 3, M Harrington.

12½st: 1, John Harrington; 2, D Miller; 3, J Little.

Harbottle

Under-12: 1, J Brown; 2, M Fielding; 3, E Forster.

Under-14: 1, A Mills; 2, M Fielding; 3, W Singer.

Under-18: 1, R O'Kane; 2, G Deardon; 3, C Davy.

Novices: 1, G Deardon; 2, C Davy; 3, R O'Kane.

12st: 1, S Hamilton; 2, C Davy; 3, J Pattinson.

All Weights: 1, J Davidson; 2, S Hamilton; 3, J Pattinson.

Lowick Show

Under-12: 1, P Cowell; 2, S Brocklebank; 3, W Hayhurst.

Under-15: 1, S Wilkinson; 2, P Cowell; 3, S Brocklebank.

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

12½st: 1, G Brocklebank; 2, W Hayhurst; 3, S Brocklebank.

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

Wolsingham Show

Under-12: 1, J Thompson; 2, J Brown; 3, J Walton.

Under-15: 1, W Noimai; 2, J Hodgson; 3, M Harrington.

Under-18: 1, R Walton; 2, W Noimai; 3, J Hodgson.

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

11st: 1, A Carlile; 2, J Pattinson; 3, John Harrington.

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

14st: 1, A Walton; 2, A Jones; 3, John Harrington.

All Weights: 1, R Leiper; 2, J Davidson; 3, Joe Threlfall.

23rd September 2005

HARRINGTONS ON TOP

JOHN Harrington farms on the slopes of Binsey, Lakeland's northrenmost fell, but three times last week he went wrestling. He won once at Loweswater Show, twice at Borrowdale and three times at Egremont Crab Fair.

Last year, Loweswater Show was flattened by a storm that blew the cattle tent away. This year it merely rained all day.

Despite the conditions, a surprising number of people stayed to watch and compete. The highlight of the boys' wrestling was Paul Murray's win in the Under 12 Years, followed by a spirited performance in the Under 15 Years, when he made life difficult for some much bigger lads.

Then John Harrington took over, coping neatly with some strong local wrestlers to win the 12½ stones. In the All Weights he finally met his match in David Barnes of Dearham. Each wrestler struck successfully with a perfectly executed outside-hipe to set up the decider.

Barnes had all the hold but could not finish Harrington off going forwards, so he change direction in an instant and turned him back onto the sodden grass.

Egremont Crab Fair attracted few regular wrestlers, but those who did travel had to pick their way through a good entry of locals.

Quality and training came to the fore in the boys' categories, with Carlisle Wrestling Club members, Paul Murray, and brothers Michael and Joe Harrington leading the way.

Paul Murray won because he could back-heel bigger lads. Michael Harrington used the hank to bamboozle the opposition. And Joe Harrington just sailed through everything, unchecked.

Then it was over to cousin John who won everything else. His biggest challenge came in the semi-final of the All Weights when he met heavyweight Carl Clark who can fell anyone on his day.

A skilful lightweight's best ploy against a heavier man is the hank which often comes into effect at the last moment when the heavier man thinks the fall is already won, and that is what John Harrington used to great effect.

Bruce Haines who helped to set up the The Folk Archive Exhibition which is touring the country competed in the wrestling.

Gurning and wrestling are central to the 738-year- old Crab Fair and are reflected in the exhibition which comes to Manchester in July 2006.

The pick of the week's wrestling took place at Borrowdale Show which drew wrestlers from the whole region.

In the Under 18 Years the Champion, Richard Dixon, had to pull out all the stops against Graham Brocklebank of Warton, culminating in a full buttock for the decider.

In the 11½ stones Brocklebank regrouped and felled Dixon, but could not make anything of John Harrington in the final.

The final of the All Weights was a fitting climax to an exciting programme of wrestling. Thomas Brocklebank has been making a habit of winning heavyweight events recently and he was not to be denied at Borrowdale.

Fox did bring him over the top with a spectacular buttock to set up a tense decider.

RESULTS

Loweswater Show

Under-12 Years: 1, P Murray; 2, D Kilby.

U-15:1, W Nixon; 2, P Murray; 3, I Todd.

Girls: 1, M Clark; 2, E Todd; 3, M Todd.

12½st: 1, John Harrington; 2, C Harrison; 3, G Kenyon.

All Weights: 1, D Barnes; 2, John Harrington; 3, E Steel.

Egremont Crab Fair

U-12: 1, P Murray; 2, R Lister; 3, F Clark.

U-15:1, M Harrington; 2, S Rice; 3, M Lister.

U-18:1, Joe Harrington; 2, M Wilson; 3, S Rice.

11½st: 1, John Harrington; 2, M Harrington; 3, S Rice.

13st: 1, John Harrington; 2, Joe Harrington; 3, A Sullivan.

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

Guinness Trophy: John Harrington.

Borrowdale Show

U-12: 1, D Ewart; 2, J Brown; 3, P Murray.

U-15: 1, W Noimai; 2, J Ewart; 3, B Brocklebank.

U-18: 1, R Dixon; 2, G Brocklebank; 3, J Ewart.

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

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

All Weights: 1, T Brocklebank; 2, R Fox; 3, Joe Harrington.

30th September 2005

SEX REVOLUTION IN THE TRADITION-STEPPED WORLD OF WRESTLING

A QUIET revolution in Cumberland and Westmorland wrestling has been stirring in a steep-sided valley embedded in the Pennine's of South Cumbria.

The Hodgson family of Dentdale are stalwarts of Kendal Academy and Trevor Hodgson, dad, was winning the 14st championship nearly twenty years ago and last year was Grasmere Heavyweight Champion, but the new ingredient, the catalyst for change, has come from his sister and his three daughters.

Until recently girls and women could compete with the boys and men in Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling. (probably because of an oversight, for when the rules were redrawn in 1906 no-one could imagine that women would do anything so unladylike!) When the rule was changed to bring the situation into line with other contact sports there was a brief media flurry, then it looked as if there would be no opportunities for girls to wrestle, but two years ago Grasmere Sports decided to put on four categories of female wrestling with more than £500 in prize-money. Very occasionally other events would have a girls' competition. And in the winter girls took part in Academy wrestling and training.

This year two Icelandic girls travelled to compete at Grasmere, and their presence led to other events on that Bank Holiday week-end staging women's wrestling to accommodate them.

Ironically, the chief beneficiary was Tracy Hodgson who had no fewer than six wins over the week-end, and that began a trend, for virtually every subsequent event has had a Ladies Open Wrestling class.

Many a long mile from Dentdale the wrestling at Langholm Show continued that trend, for the Hodgson girls were there in force. The three sisters were first, second and third.

In the Men's All Weights Trevor Hodgson was up against the confident skills of two Carlisle wrestlers, John Harrington and Richard Fox. He survived against Harrington in the semi-final, just, when his opponent overloaded himself in trying to outside hipe and fell flat on his back. Richard Fox made no mistake, though, in the final, buttocking for the first fall and then winning the second with his trade-mark right leg back-heel which locks into place and refuses to budge.

All but one of the competitions were won by regular wrestlers. Jack Brown of Haydon Bridge wrestled well against some good local talent in the Under 12 Years. Watchai Noimai of Anthorn won the under 15 Years after a long tussle with Michael Harrington, and John Harrington won this week's episode of the long-running series of close fought bouts with Richard Fox.

The exception came in the Under 18 Years when Alistair Cabers, a local lad who only competes in his own patch, showed good basic skills to control the exuberance of Watchai Noimai.

Graham Benson had a field day at Eskdale Show. In the absence of any senior wrestlers he went right through the day unbeaten in all the classes he entered. Tucker Mason, the organiser, was upset about the poor entry, so I was pleasantly surprised to find a message from Essex on my answering machine from

some-one who had enjoyed the wrestling so much at Eskdale that he was asking to buy a copy of my book " A Documentary History of C & W Wrestling" to further his interest.

Results:

Langholm Show: Under 12 Years 1, J Brown; 2, C Sands; 3, L Hawes.

Under 15 Years 1, W Noimai; 2, M Harrington; 3, H Jeffrey.

Under 18 Years 1, A Cabers; 2, W Noimai; 3, J Hodgson.

Ladies Open 1, T Hodgson; 2, H Hodgson; 3, C Hodgson.

121/2st 1, John Harrington; 2, J Perkin; 3, R Fox.

All Weights 1, R Fox; 2, T Hodgson; 3, John Harrington.

Eskdale Show: Under 13 Years 1, D Ewart; 2, M Dickinson.

Under 15 Years 1, G Benson; 2, S Wilkinson; 3, J Ewart.

Under 18 Years 1, G Benson; 2, S Wilkinson; 3, J Ewart.

101/2st 1, S Wilkinson; 2, B Case; 3, C Naylor.

12st 1, G Benson; 2, J Ewart; 3, S Wilkinson.

All Weights 1, G Benson; 2, J Ewart; 3, S Wilkinson.

20th October 2005

WORLDS APART

FILA (the International Federation of Associated Wrestling Styles) has its headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland, and governs wrestling worldwide, including the Olympic Games. Buttermere Show, hidden away in the steep valleys of NW Lake District, has a Herdwick sheep show, fell running, hound-trailing and the last event on the Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling calendar for 2005. Apart from mountains, what possible connection can there be between these two worlds? The link is that Buttermere Show is affiliated to the C&W Wrestling Association, and the CWWA in turn is affiliated to FILC (Federation Internationale des Luttes Celtiques). At a recent meeting in St Malo, Brittany, between The President of FILA and the President of FILC another link in the chain was proposed: a partnership between the two federations. This proposal has yet to be adopted, but it flags up that "FILA and the FILC share common values of solidarity and support between peoples; of defence of the traditional practices, real cultural inheritances that show history and the reality of a country, a people, an ethnic group or a clan; of support to the national wrestling federations and to the national policies of the education, Youth and Sports Ministries". Having established common ground, the document then goes on to more practical matters which would establish a partnership between FILA and FILC. National wrestling bodies like the British Wrestling Association, which governs Olympic Freestyle wrestling in Britain would be required to accept the C&W Wrestling Association as a partner rather than a rival, as used to be the case, "with the objective that wrestling and more especially Traditional wrestling, will be recognised and sustained". We can do with all the recognition and sustenance available if it means that sports grants and awards are more easily accessed. The proposed partnership in no way diminishes the independence of our Wrestling Association, but may make official contacts with Government agencies that much easier. Realistically, Buttermere Show will not be affected in the slightest by these international accords, but in theory at least the most powerful world figures in international wrestling are pleased it's happening. In researching this piece I went onto the FILA web-site (www.fila-wrestling.com) and found a section on "Celtic Wrestling" with a picture of Andrew Carlile and Alf Harrington on the first page, so perhaps the connections are already there. Nearly forty Young Farmers from Penrith had a night of wrestling action at Carlisle Wrestling Club last week. Any other

clubs wishing to sample wrestling should contact me on 016974 73559. Academies: Tuesdays - Waberthwaite Wednesdays - Carlisle Thursdays - Milnthorpe Fridays - Kendal.

25th October 2005

BUTTERMERE SHOW 2005

Buttermere Show is over, so as far as wrestlers are concerned it is now officially Winter. The serious wrestlers, mostly boys, travelled unlikely distances from Northumberland and Lancashire to compete at this tiny Herdwick, hound, terrier and ferret show nestling in the Lakeland Fells. The Brocklebank family from Warton on the Lancashire edge of Morecambe Bay had a particularly good day, despite the rain. Ben Brocklebank set the standard in the Under 12 Years which he won after a final with Paul Murray of Arlecdon. Murray tried to buttock but Brocklebank had been well schooled at Kendal Academy to throw his man forward from the attack. Graham Brocklebank then went one step better by hiping his way through all the opposition in the Under 18 Years, and then doing the same in the men's 12½ Stones. Then it was the turn of big brother, Thomas, who proved himself the gentle giant by lifting all the opposition and then gently laying them down on the wet hillside which served as a wrestling ring. The only open event not won by a Brocklebank was the Under 15 Years, the final of which saw the first of a highly competitive set of bouts between Jack Ewart of Westward and Finn Healey of Haydon Bridge. The winning cross-buttock from Jack Ewart was one of the falls of the day. Two girls were particularly well matched. Elizabeth and Margaret Todd are twins and had a set of hard bouts before Elizabeth won. As often happens on these occasions local wrestlers made the event with their enthusiasm and unorthodox approach. One bout left the judges astonished and the crowd in stitches. John Richardson was wrestling hard in the Under 15 Years when it became obvious that his hipster jeans were heading south. Just before gravity and exertion completed the job, he broke hold, pulled his trousers up, grabbed hold again and continued wrestling until he was told that his bid for decency had cost him the fall.

Buttermere Show:

Under 12 Years: 1, B Brocklebank; 2, P Murray; 3, L Smith.

Under 15 Years: 1, J Ewart; 2, F Healey; 3, Brocklebank.

Under 18 Years: 1, G Brocklebank; 2, F Healey; 3, M Hayton.

Locals: 1, M Hayton; 2, J Richardson; 3, D Jarman. Girls: 1, E Todd; 2, M Todd.

12½st: 1, G Brocklebank; 2, F Healey; 3, M Hayton.

All Weights: 1, T Brocklebank; 2, J Ewart; 3, M Hayton.

2nd November 2005

NORTHERN COUNTIES ANNUAL DINNER AND PRESENTATION EVENING

Wrestlers and wrestling supporters gathered from all corners of the Northern Counties of England for the Annual Dinner and Presentation Night at Carlisle, when the most successful and keenest wrestlers received trophies.

For the second year in succession Daniel Ewart of Westward was the winner of the Under 12 Years Victor Ludorum Trophy. He has been a regular at winter training sessions at Carlisle Wrestling Club for several years and that shows in the variety of chips in his repertoire. As well as the skill factor and the strength factor, he also has the parent factor. His father, Alan, takes Daniel and big brother Jack to most events in Cumbria.

The popular winner of the Under 15 Years Trophy had never heard of Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling two years ago, nor could he speak English. When Watchai Noimai arrived from Thailand to live

with his mother and step-father at Anthorn, he made friends with Michael Harrington at school, and from there developed an interest in wrestling. Once more parent power is important, for Watchai was taken to most wrestling events and to the Academy in the winter-time. As a result the crowds throughout the North have been treated to some unconventional, lithe wrestling from Watchai.

Joe Harrington, the winner of the Under 18 Years Trophy, has had a more conventional route into wrestling. In fact, with his surname it would be difficult to avoid being a good wrestler. That, of course is easy to say, but the reality is that Joe like any other wrestler has had to put the hours into training and competing to reach his present status. We have watched his ups and downs as he came up through the age categories until he is now tall, athletic and brimming with skill. Apart from winning most points in the season, he has also won several prestigious "best wrestler" awards.

John Harrington weighs in at under 11½st but is capable of felling anyone on his day. Heavyweight wrestlers must flinch when they are drawn against him for he will seize on any slight error to win a fall. That skill and his willingness to travel widely won him all the senior trophies. He had most points in the Lightweights (11½st), Middleweights (13st) and the Heavyweights.

Darren Whitfield had the most wins in the Heavyweights, but John Harrington's eleven second places swung it in his favour. Just for good measure, John was also awarded the coveted "Wrestlers' Wrestler Trophy", voted for by the active wrestlers on the night itself.

This year for the first time there was a Victrix Ludorum Trophy. Women's and girls' wrestling has taken place on an unprecedented scale this year and the overwhelming winner of the Ladies Trophy was Tracy Hodgson from Dentdale, who trains at Kendal academy. Anyone who has not yet seen the "Blood, Sweat and Tears" exhibition at Tullie House, Carlisle, should do so soon for it will close in January. The exhibition puts Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling in its regional context with Fell Running, Hound Trailing, Horse Racing, Foot ball and Rugby and other sports. Our wrestling counts as "Sweat" in the publicity poster, with Cock Fighting as "Blood" and Carlisle United as "Tears". (The Exhibition was set up with United in the Conference League!) Anyone with an interest in our regional sporting heritage will find the displays fascinating.

In conjunction with the Exhibition an illustrated talk: "*Wrestling Tales: Cumbrian Sport - Its History and Practice*" is scheduled for 7.30pm on Thursday, 17th November. The two speakers will bring a "*mixture of real sporting experience and historical perspective*" The "*historical perspective*" comes from Dr Mike Huggins, lecturer in Sports Studies and History at St Martin's College, Lancaster: The "*real sporting experience*" comes from me. I, for one, am curious to hear what an academic like Dr Huggins will make of Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling. If the talk is to go ahead, enough tickets have to be sold before November 9th from the Box Office (01228 534664)

Next week sees the first Academy Shield Competition to be held at Milnthorpe Academy (7.30pm November 12th in Milnthorpe Cricket Pavilion) Carlisle Wrestling Club will be picking its team after its first Points Night of the season on Wednesday, 9th November. A team from Northumberland may be joining the established academies of Carlisle, Kendal, Milnthorpe and Waberthwaite. A new academy is being set up in Rothbury, which is the main base for wrestling in Northumberland.

10th November 2005

CARLISLE POINTS NIGHT

Currock House Community Centre serves a small area of Carlisle, but also hosts each week a community which stretches from West Cumbria and the coastal plain right up to hill farms near Alston and through the Tyne Gap to Haydon Bridge.

Carlisle Wrestling Club held its first Points Night of the Winter and it brought youngsters and parents and wrestlers from all quarters of the compass. In the final of the Under 12 Years Joe Thompson of Alston felled Paul Murray of Arlecdon near Whitehaven. The trophy for the best wrestler was won by Jack Brown of Haydon Bridge.

So many young wrestlers turned up that the original intention to take only one team to the Academy Shield on Saturday was abandoned and a B team was selected. The boys vastly outnumbered the men, but the intensity of competition amongst the seniors was remarkable. Only four wrestlers weighed in for the 11½ stones, but after the round-robin competition was finished it had to be re-run twice before a result was obtained. That set the standard for the rest of the weights, for there were wrestle-offs in each section of the men's wrestling. In such a climate, John Harrington can be proud of a double win in the middle weights and the All Weights.

Out of almost three hours of wrestling I especially remember Joe Thompson croos-clicking Paul Murray for the deciding fall in the Under 12 Years; Jack Ewart buttocking his way to victory against the shrewd Adam Ridley in the final of the Under 15 Years; a new talent, Josh Desborough controlling Watchai Noimai in the Under 15 final, and Helen Housby making life difficult for the lads with hanks. "Brilliant!" said Sid Housby only once, and that was when Andrew Carlile threw the long legs of Richard Dixon into the distance with a hipe, but still had to finish off with an outside stroke to take the neatest of falls. The standard of wrestling was such that only the best chips, perfectly timed gained success.

Milnthorpe Academy's winter wrestling programme continued as usual last week, with wrestling training and internal competitions, but this week-end will be a remarkable one in its short history, for it will host the Academy Shield for the first time. The internal competitions saw Douglas Parsons win the Under 14 Years when he felled Stuart Mason in the final with a twist over the knee. The Under 16 Years had a high action final between Tom Mason and Sam Wilkinson with both wrestlers swinging and twisting, but Mason twice took falls by putting in the last twist.

The Academy Shield was originally awarded for the winner of the Academy League in the post-War wrestling boom sixty years ago. After falling into disuse in the sixties the Shield Match was reconstituted in its present form in the eighties. Teams are expected from Northumberland, West Cumbria, Carlisle and Kendal as well as the host club.

Carlisle Wrestling Club Points Night

6st: 1, J Brown; 2, J Walton; 3, D Miller; 4, H Housby.

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

8½st: 1, A Ridley; 2, M Harrington; 3, W Noimai; 4, D Ewart.

10st: 1, J Desborough; 2, W Noimai; 3, C Ridley; 4, P Murray

Girls: 8st 1, K Brown; 2, H Housby.

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

Under 12 Years: 1, J Thompson; 2, P Murray; 3, H Housby; 3, J Walton.

Under 15 Years: 1, J Ewart; 2, A Ridley; 3, W Noimai; 4, M Harrington.

Under 18 Years: 1, R Dixon; 2, C Potts; 3, Joe Harrington; 4, P Housby.

11½st: 1, A Carlile; 2, R Dixon; 3, John Harrington; 4, C Potts.

13st: 1, John Harrington; 2, A Carlile; 3, C Potts; 4, R Dixon.

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

16th November 2005

MILNETHORPE ACADEMY SHIELD MATCH

Fifty wrestlers and a goodly crowd converged on Milnthorpe for the Academy Shield Match. Milnthorpe Academy's boys were reinforced by some Lancastrians. Kendal and Waberthwaite were there in force. Carlisle fielded two teams and even the Northumbrians, with their new academy at Rothbury only two weeks old, were there to compete.

The loudest academy was Waberthwaite, and their Joe Lowery enthused himself into a corner with his dynamic encouragement of anything in a pale blue t-shirt. As each Waberthwaite wrestler competed, his unbridled encouragement brought out the best in the most inexperienced of wrestlers, then, all at once, it was his turn in the final category of all, the All Weights. Facing him were Carl Clark with his head scraping the ceiling, Thomas Brocklebank with a double helping of shoulders, Darren Whitfield, the Northumbrian

pele-tower, and Joe Threlfall with prodigious power and experience. What hope had la'al Joe who was small enough to have had ambitions (failed) to weigh in for the 15 stones?

Against all odds Joe Lowery went back to the basics of his wrestling success; one by one he buttocked all his massive opponents and so impressed that fine former champion, Alan Coulthard, that he awarded him the cup for the best individual performance of all in this feast of wrestling. Unfortunately for Waberthwaite, that was the peak of their achievement.

Kendal Academy had four wrestlers, Ben Brocklebank (6st), Sam Wilkinson (10st), John Wilson (14st) and Joseph Robson (15st) who were good enough to win all their bouts.

But Carlisle Wrestling Club were even better with five wrestlers unbeaten: Adam Ridley (8st), Watchai Noimai (9st), Richard Dixon (11st), Andrew Carlile (12st) and John Harrington (13st). After three sections Carlisle was in the lead and stayed there despite a late rally by Kendal. Although Carlisle Wrestling Club earned the right to engrave their name on the Academy Shield for 2005.

The chief winner was Cumberland and Westmorland wrestling in a crowded evening of excellent competition.

Results:

Academy Shield 2005 - 1. Carlisle 44; 2. Kendal 39; 3. Waberthwaite 26; 4. Milnthorpe 21; 5. Northumberland 20; 6. Carlisle 2nds 14.

23rd November 2005

RESULTS 2005

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

The 2005 Grass Season of Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling

.....was a year for youth, with no fewer than eight of the most prolific winners in senior men's events under the age of twenty. The number of senior wrestlers who regularly turn out to compete is probably at an all time low, but wrestling has been sustained by a vintage crop of youngsters coming out from the academies, and the enthusiastic participation of novice wrestlers. Ambleside Sports, on a dismal day, had one of the biggest entries for many a year for the Heavyweight Championship. Alwinton Show had so many wrestlers that two rings had to be used to cope. On the same day Wasdale Head Show had only three regular wrestlers taking part.

Alan Coulthard and Joe Lowery

Leading the charge of talented youngsters is John Harrington of Bewaldeth, who had a vintage year. He won four times as many events as any other wrestler. His wins included two championships and a Grasmere title. He travelled far and wide and was capable of felling anyone, so not surprisingly he came away from the CWWA Presentation Dinner with three points trophies for the year.

For the first time Girls and Women's wrestling became a standard feature of wrestling events, and Tracey Hodgson of Dentdale virtually monopolised that category.

Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling Statistics 2005

Events

Fifty-seven events affiliated to the Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling Association in a season which began with the Southern Area YFC Field Day on 21st May, and ended on the 22nd October at Buttermere Show. Thirty-seven were in Cumbria, thirteen in Northumberland, four in Scotland, two in Durham and one in Lancashire.

Academies

Four academies at Carlisle, Kendal, Milnthorpe and Waberthwaite affiliated to the CWWA. A new academy at Rothbury started up in October.

2005 RESULTS

WINNERS	MEN	Wins	WINNERS	Boys	Wins
John Harrington	Bewaldeth	40	Daniel Ewart	Westward	17
Graham Brocklebank	.....	10	Joe Harrington	Kirkbampton	16
Alan Walton	Haltwhistle	10	Graham Benson	Langdale	15
Thomas Brocklebank	Warton	8	Watchai Noimai	Anthorn	15
A Carlile	Carlisle	8	Graham Brocklebank	Warton	14
Darren Whitfield	Rothbury	8	Scott Brocklebank	.....	11
Richard Fox	Hethersgill	7	Richard Dixon	Lessonhall	10
David Atkinson	Carlisle	6	Sam Wilkinson	.....	7
David Barnes	Dearham	5	Jack Brown	Langley on Tyne	6
Richard Dixon	.....	4	Stuart Mason	Milnthorpe	6
Joe Threlfall	Preston	4	Richard Walton	Haltwhistle	6
Richard Walton	.....	4	Jack Ewart	Westward	5
Graham Benson	.....	3	Ben Brocklebank	Warton	3
Jason Davidson	Rothbury	3	Paul Murray	Arlecdon	3
Matthieu le Dour	Brittany	3	Finn Healey	Tynemouth	2
Joseph Robson	Grayrigg	3	Jake Hodgson	Dentdale	2
John Taylor	Glasgow	3	Joe Thompson	Alston	2
Richard Younger	Ponteland	3	23 others	.....	1
Carl Clark	Arlecdon	2	.....	Girls	
Simon Hamilton	Capheaton	2	Tracey Hodgson	Dentdale	6
Joe Harrington	.....	2	2 others	.....	1
Robert Leiper	Stamfordham	2	.....	Women	
Robert McNamara	East Kilbride	2	Tracey Hodgson	.....	11
J Milburn	.....	2	Donna Thompson	Alston	2
12 others	.....	1	2 others	.....	1

WORLD	CHAMPIONSHIP	WINNERS
All Weights	Robert McNamara	Ambleside Sports
15 Stone	Robert Leiper	Forestburngate
14 Stone	Joseph Robson	Cumberland Show
13 Stone	Alan Walton	Millom and Broughton Show
12 Stone	John Harrington	Yetholm Show
11 Stone	John Harrington	Great Ecclestone Show
10 1/2 Stone	Andrew Carlile	Skelton Show
Under 18	Richard Dixon	Dalston Show, Carlisle
Under 18/ 10 Stone	Richard Dixon	Alwinton Show
Under 15	Graham Brocklebank	Carlisle Vintage Society
Under 15/ 8 Stone	Adam Ridley	Slaggyford Allendale Show
Grasmere	Champions	Grasmere Sports
Guinness	Trophies	N/A
Richard Fox	N/A	Cumberland Show
Matthieu Le Dour	N/A	Ambleside
Joe Harrington	N/A	Grasmere
Richard Dixon	N/A	Keswick Show
John Harrington	N/A	Egremont Crab Fair

CWWA	Points	Trophies
Under 12	Daniel Ewart	.....
Under 15	Watchai Noimai	.....
Under 18	Joe Harrington	.....
11 1/2 Stone	John Harrington	.....
13 Stone	John Harrington	.....
All Weights	John Harrington	.....

30th November 2005

THE LAKELAND SPORTS PROMOTER'S ASSOCIATION LUNCH 2005

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

The Lakeland Sport Promoters Association acknowledged the exploits of five wrestlers at their events during 2005.

A crowded luncheon at the Heaves Hotel, Kendal, applauded Scott Brocklebank from Tewitfield (boys under 12 years) Graham Benson from Langdale (boys under 15 years); Tracey Hodgson from Dent (girls under 15 years), Graham Brocklebank from Warton (boys under 18 years) and John Harrington from Bewaldeth (seniors).

In addition, Graham Brocklebank was named Junior Lakeland Sports person and John Harrington received the main accolade as Lakeland Sports Personality 2005.

The engraved shields on the trophy he received read like a Who's Who of Lakeland sporting greats, starting with Bill Teasdale, King of the Fells in the sixties. The awards relate to performances in LSPA affiliated events, many of which are in the south of Cumbria, where the fell running tradition is strongest.

As a result, John Harrington only attended four of the qualifying events, but he did so well at Millom, Grasmere, the Westmorland Show and Egremont Crab Fair, that he was a clear winner. At a thinly attended Crab Fair he won all three senior events; at the Westmorland Show in a series of toughly contested weights he gained two firsts and a second.

Graham Brocklebank was briefly in the Under 15 Years section at the beginning of the season, but after winning the Under 15 Championship at Carlisle, he moved up to the higher age-group. At LSPA events he won seven times including two senior wins.

Graham Benson of Langdale, the Under 15 Years nominee, also had seven wins. He is comparatively new to the sport and this year has been on a fast learning curve, improving all the time on his abundant natural abilities.

Tracey Hodgson of Dent has brought a new dimension to wrestling: the expectation that women's wrestling would form part of the programme at most meetings. She had a year to remember, especially the Bank Holiday week-end when she won at Newcastleton, Bellingham, Silloth, Keswick and twice at Grasmere.

Scott Brocklebank is a formidable opponent in the ring at Under 12 Years, but on the day of the LSPA awards he had been flattened by illness, so his father had to pick up the trophy which came from his success at seven venues.

Four runners also received awards: Emily Throup of Silsden had won three fell races including that at Wasdale Show. Rory Addison, a junior fellrunner from Kendal, also had three first including Ambleside in the rain. The senior nominees were Alistair Dunn, a fell runner whose wins included Wasdale and Ambleside, and Dave Allen, a track runner from Garsdale, who won prolifically at the four events which still continue the tradition of track running at Lakeland meets.

The trophy winners at the Lakeland Sports Promoters Association presentation luncheon held at the Heaves Hotel on Sunday 27th November are:

Alistair Dunn (fell runner from Kendal),

John Harrington (Lakeland Sports Personality 2005, wrestler from Bewaldeth),

Dave Allen (track-runner from Garsdale),

Graham Benson (boys under 15 years, wrestler from Langdale);

Tracey Hodgson (girls under 15 years, wrestler from Dent),

Emily Throup (girls under 12 years, fellrunner from Silsden),

Rory Addison (boys under 14 years, fellrunner from Kendal),

Graham Brocklebank (Junior Lakeland Sportsperson 2005, boys under 18 years, wrestler from Warton).

Missing due to illness: Scott Brocklebank (boys under 12 years, wrestler from Tewitfield)

14th December 2005

CD ARCHIVES

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

A hundred years ago Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling was a corrupt sport, and had been for many years: "barneying" was rife. My Chambers Dictionary defines the barneying as "(colloquial) a rough noisy quarrel; humbug; a prize-fight", but everyone in Northern England knew that it meant the fixing the outcome of wrestling events before they took place. The mixture of high prize-money, gambling and general poverty of the working classes led to the situation where only a proportion of the bouts were genuine.

In 1906 all that changed when The Association Governing Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling now the CWWA, was formed. That means, of course, that 2006 is the CWWA centenary year and plans are afoot to celebrate. A few years ago there was a grand gathering of old and contemporary wrestlers at Shap Wells Hotel, organised by John Richardson. One of the biggest points of interest was a display of photographs which brought back memories for so many of those present. After the recent slide show launching the CD archive of photographs of wrestling in 2005, the question arose: why don't we, produce a CD as an archive of the Wrestling Association's hundred years in business?

Already, as I prepared photographic images for an illustrated talk at Tullie House, I had thought that an historical archive on CD would be a good idea. Then I had mainly been thinking of material from the 19th Century, but the conversation at the slide show changed the focus: we should start backside first with Volume Two: the last hundred years.

"... improbably big flat caps and moustaches"

Right beside me is the sort of photograph which would fit into this project. At Skelton Show ex-champion Bob Millican gave me an old photograph to research. It showed a wrestler with a big trophy, a lady with a long skirt and a big hat, seated gentlemen in bowler hats and the crowd behind in improbably big flat caps and moustaches. In neat writing on the reverse it said "Calthwaite Gala".

The first part was easy, for at Skelton Show there were plenty of champion wrestlers around to identify the trophy as that now on John Harrington's mantelpiece - the Wrestling Association 12st cup. The second stage was to look in my predecessor Bob Horsley's records of the championships which furnished the information that in 1914 J.G Graham of Haltwhistle felled J. Saul of Aspatria in the final of the 10st World Championship at Calthwaite Gala out of an entry of 27 wrestlers.

The magnificent trophy had a chequered career initially. From 1907 to 1911 it was for the 8½st Championship, but in 1912 it was not awarded when Southwaite Flower Show refused it. From 1913 to 1930, with a gap for the Great War, the cup was allocated to the 10st Championship. Even then men must have been gaining size, for in 1931 the trophy was re-allocated to the 12st Championship, and that is how it has remained. Even more detail is available by searching the sports pages of the local papers for summer 1914

Hidden away

How many similar photographs are hidden away in drawers and attics, when they could be part of a history of Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling? Anyone with such photographs, who would like to help, should contact me (016974 73559). The photographs would simply be scanned into a computer and then returned.

The CD of photographs of the 2005 Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling season is now available from me price £7.50 + £1 postage - all profits to the Wrestling Association

22nd December 2005

CUMBERLAND AND WESTMORLAND WRESTLING IS ALIVE AND WELL - AND FLOURISHING

Good News for Christmas and the New Year: Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling is alive, well, and flourishing. At least that was the impression I got when I contacted the five academies which stretch across the Border Counties of England.

This end of term report on the academies lacks the rigour of an Ofsted inspection, based as it is on phone calls to my friends who are the senior coaches at Kendal, Milnthorpe, Rothbury and Waberthwaite.....I did not bother to phone Alan Jones at Carlisle as I see him every week at the Wrestling Club at Currock House..... but each coach was in an upbeat mood and talked enthusiastically about the youngsters at their clubs.

Youth is the present theme for there is almost a missing generation of wrestlers in their twenties and early thirties. Instead there is a tide of young wrestlers flowing onto the academy mats. The biggest flood seems to be at Kendal Academy based in the Leisure Centre each Friday, where John Wilson has a breathless two hours – “I don't stop to take air in and have to carry a water bottle” – coaching twenty-five “little boys”. Meanwhile they have a group of lads ready to make their mark in the seniors. He particularly mentioned Graham Brocklebank of Warton “wrestling like a man now” and the all round athleticism of Graham Benson of Langdale.

Kendal Academy has competitions each week, but John Wilson found that the old format meant that too much time was taken up with formal wrestling and not enough with training. By reducing the competitions to “sudden death” he reduced the time by at least half and now has more time to develop the skills of the young wrestlers. The club supports the move to a new style strip for wrestling and has found grants and other money to subsidise modern strips for its wrestlers.

The Kendal area is unique in being served by two academies with David Parsons coaching local lads at Minthorpe Academy. His is a much smaller operation than that at Kendal for he aims to run a class for about a dozen wrestlers. He has a small group of experienced wrestlers well able to hold their own in the older boys classes, so much so that he is thinking of offering them a trip to wrestle in Brittany in March. At the younger end he is actively seeking more wrestlers to boost numbers.

Waberthwaite Village Hall is a beacon for wrestlers on the far West of Cumbria each Tuesday night. For many years Tom Porter, as coach, has ploughed a lone furrow, but at last he has an ally. Joe Lowery, won the trophy for the best performance in the wrestling at the Academy Shield competition, and would also have won a trophy for Noisiest Supporter of the Night if there had been one. That zest has been channelled into coaching a group of about ten lads in their mid-teens, while Tom coaches the younger boys. One lad, Stephen Killhope, thought so much of the wrestling academy that he did a sponsored bike ride and handed over £70 for academy funds. In the New Year they are expecting up to forty Drigg Young Farmers to swamp the hall as they did last year.

Out on a limb in Northumberland is the newest academy, only eight weeks old, at Rothbury. Of course there have been previous manifestations just up the Coquet Valley at Harbottle and Thropton, but there had been a long time gap since Thropton closed. Only four wrestlers attended for the first session, but since then numbers improved week by week until there were fifteen wrestlers at the last night before the school pantomime closed the club until they resume on Wednesday, 11th January. Jason Davidson, the main coach, has a good situation for there is a Youth Club in the school at the same time as the wrestling training and the activity is offered free of charge.

I usually arrive late at Carlisle Wrestling Club for I no longer coach. As I open the door to the Currock House Gym I am always knocked back by the heat, light, noise and dynamic action. Alan Jones, the main coach, with support from Andrew Carlile and Tom Harrington have a high energy training regime which combines lots of action with detailed back-up on detail. And lined up at the side of the mat are the chauffeurs enjoying the spectacle. The drivers are needed because few wrestlers walk to the club; the majority travel many miles to take part regularly. Paul Murray comes each week from beside Whitehaven. His rival and sparring partner, Jack Brown, lives beside Haydon Bridge and Joe Thompson comes from Alston. At Carlisle there is a strong contingent of young wrestlers, but they also have a marvellous group of young wrestlers who have brought a freshness and skill to men's wrestling throughout the Northern Counties.

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