



LONG ago some boxing writer or fight fan tagged on to Liverpool Stadium a label that stuck—"Graveyard of Champions." The reason was that so many champions went down to defeat at the famous old hall in Pudsey Street. The new Liverpool Stadium has maintained the traditions of the original hall and here our contributor recalls some of the contests and events which have made Liverpool's boxing hall known throughout the fistic world.

—These—
Historic Fights,
Historic
Incidents,
Will Stir The
Memory —

TEN thousands contests represent a lot of fighting and quite a slice of boxing history. When they have taken place in one place it is easy to understand why that particular city figures prominently in the annals of boxing in this country. During the war a G.I. stationed on Merseyside sent a letter to a New York boxing writer describing Liverpool as "the hottest fight town in Great Britain"—he wasn't far wrong.

In the darkest days of war the flame of boxing was never allowed to die on Merseyside. The fans continued to occupy their favourite seats at Liverpool Stadium, despite the fact that the Nazi bombers made Merseyside their main target outside London. It was on such enthusiasm and love for boxing that the foundations of Liverpool Stadium, old and new, were built.

OPEN AIR BOUT DREW 15,000



Another picture of JOHNNY BEST, this time in "civvies," with three of the men who played a big part in the success of his promotions. They are (left to right): JIMMY WALSH, NEL TARLETON and ERNIE RODERICK.

Tarleton's Triumph On Liverpool Football Ground At Anfield

ON October 1, 1931, Mr. Best broke new ground by staging a featherweight title contest at Anfield, the home of the Liverpool Football Club. It was not easy to obtain the use of the ground because the Club's Directors were afraid of damage to the pitch if spectators, in their excitement, invaded the playing field. However, chiefly through the good offices of Mr. Ernest Edwards ("Bee" of the Liverpool Echo) permission was granted.

"Bee" made an appeal to all fight fans, through his column, asking them not to encroach on the playing pitch. It is to the everlasting credit of Liverpool boxing fans that they never did, and have never done so at any of the open air shows staged at Anfield.

This first title contest at Anfield was a success from every angle. Twenty-four powerful lights illuminated the ring and in the darkness the glow-worm effect of the hundreds of flickering lights on Spion Kop was an unforgettable sight. Fifteen thousand fans came through the turnstiles and were rewarded by seeing

Nel Tarleton bring Liverpool its first Lonsdale Belt and British title, when he outpointed Johnny Cuthbert.

Five months later Nel achieved what I always considered his greatest triumph. On the same ground he outpointed, by a very good margin, Al Foreman, then holder of the British lightweight title and one of the hardest hitters at his weight in the world. In fact he held the record for the quickest K.O., having beaten Ruby Levine in 11½ seconds.

Tarleton's display was that of a master boxer. His feinting, parrying of blows, ringcraft and generalship, were of the highest order.

BEHIND THE SCENES

ALTHOUGH some 20,000 spectators witnessed this contest few of them were aware that the fight was not definitely on until just before the main event boxers were due to enter the ring. At the weigh-in there had been a scene between the rival managers, Ted Broadribb, who was looking after Tarleton, and Maurice Foreman, who acted as his brother's manager. Maurice Foreman "blew up" when Tarleton's correct weight was announced and declared that, as far as he was concerned, the fight was off.

He was apprehensive lest Tarleton, who scaled well below the lightweight pound-age, should, in the event of winning, claim the lightweight title.

The rumour that the big fight had been cancelled swept the city and undoubtedly affected the gate. Mr. Best argued for hours with Foreman and finally, around 5 p.m., he agreed to go on with the contest providing the rounds were cut from 12 to 10.

This was agreed to by both parties but that was not the end of the difficulties. Foreman had brought his own gloves with him and insisted using them in the contest. To settle matters Broadribb and Tarleton agreed to allow Foreman to use them.

Boxing in one of the preliminary bouts on this programme was a rosy cheeked ginger-haired little flyweight from Liverpool's South End, Chris Foran. "Ginger" who had started out as a programme seller at Mr. Best's shows, developed into a great flyweight and, later, a first-class featherweight. He had made a sensational entry into the professional ranks by disposing of Nat Stewart in one round.

RISE OF FORAN

ON this occasion he was given his first big test, against George Anderson, South African flyweight champion. Young Chris seized the opportunity with both fists and gave a dazzling display of boxing allied to crisp, stiff punching and stopped the Springbok inside the distance.

Ginger's rise, after this, was fast. He subsequently boxed Jacky Brown for the World's flyweight title, beaten though he was at the weight.

He outgrew the flyweight and then the bantamweight divisions and blossomed out as a featherweight. He became the uncrowned king of the 9st. division when he K.O'd the reigning champion, Johnny McGrory. To this day the picture of the wee, gallant Scot, a agony stamped all over his face crawling to his corner, his jaw shattered by Foran's terrific punch, is stamped clearly on my mind.

It was a hard blow for McGrory for he had been matched with Petey Sarron, in London, for the World's featherweight title and his injury lost him a great opportunity. Foran was offered as a substitute but no agreement could be reached with the American and eventually Sarron fought Dave Crowley.

Foran did not remain in England long after this. He had always had a hankering for America and when Ralph Gold, the American fight manager came to Liverpool with an offer for Chris to go back with him to the States, Chris jumped at the chance. He put up some fine shows there and eventually settled in the country and served in the American Army during the war.

He and Gold remained firm friends and are now business partners on the Pacific Coast.

Ted Denvir, who managed Foran and later Peter Kane, has also settled down in America.

OLD GRAVEYARD IS STADIUM

THESE open air shows at Anfield kept the pot boiling whilst the search for a site for the new Stadium went on. Eventually, Mr. Best found one, an old graveyard at St. Paul's Square, adjoining Exchange Station. He decided that this was the spot and went ahead with his plans.

As was to be expected there were many objections, especially from the clergy. The local minister organised a petition against the project.

I remember how, when he sent this petition into the office of a local cotton man, a keen boxing fan, that gentleman wrote a rude word right across the page and sent it out again. These objections were eventually overruled and the padre, having done his duty, took his defeat like a true sportsman.

To finance the erection of the Stadium, Mr. Best formed a small company with Major James Bennett as chairman, Messrs. C. H. Mickle, Julius Hyams and Kenmure Kinna (who designed the Stadium) as directors and himself as managing director. Mr. Gordon Guild was the secretary. Of these, Major Bennett and Mr. Guild have passed on. Mr. John Moores has come in as director, and Mr. George Jones as secretary.

Lord Lonsdale, in company with Mr. "Jimmy" Cross, the Lord Mayor of Liverpool, laid the foundation stone in July, 1932, and three months later the new hall was ready for the first show. It was fitting that the opening contest on October 20, 1932, he should see in action Young Nat Williams, son of Mr. Best's old friend who had boxed on the opening night of the Old Stadium in 1911. Young Nat is now a resident Stadium second.

CHAMPIONS UNSEATED

THE opening night proved that the new hall was destined to live up to the traditions of the old place as the "Graveyard of Champions," for no fewer than three national champions went down to defeat. Ernie Roderick, then an up-and-coming young lightweight, beat Billy Quinlen, the Welsh lightweight title holder, Jimmy Stewart accounted for Jim Hunter, the Scottish champion, and Ginger Foran disposed of Jim Maharg, Scottish flyweight champion, in one round.

From the word go the new Stadium was a success, although it survived many stormy periods.



An action picture of that great featherweight champion, NEL TARLETON, in his prime, just after he had outpointed the previous champion, JOHNNY CUSICK, in February, 1940.

I have always held the view that the greatest chapter in the Stadium's history was written during the war years. Three weeks only robbed the Stadium of the right to boast, like the Windmill Theatre: "We Never Closed." Those weeks were spent repairing the damage done to the hall when a large bomb crashed through the roof. Mr. Best and his own depleted staff themselves cleared the debris and effected temporary repairs, working day and night to have the hall ready for boxing.

As the old variety artistes say: "Whatta performance." Carrying on week after week with few boxers available, little transport, streets blacked out and heavy bombing raids on Merseyside! Often Thursday morning would dawn with three or more substitutes to be found.

There would be hurried dashes to Army camps and pitheads. Often boxers would arrive at the Stadium with the grime of the pit still on their bodies. Tough days but great days

FREDDIE'S FIRST

DURING this period Freddie Mills got his first big chance and achieved the prominence he has held ever since. He scored a points win over great-hearted Jock McAvoy, upsetting all sorts of odds and adding one more stone to the Stadium's graveyard.

It was during this dark period, too, that Nel Tarleton confounded the critics by regaining his British featherweight title from Johnny Cusick and then defending it successfully against Tom Smith. There was a lot of drama packed into that Cusick affair and the story is worthy to be recorded.

It was a memorable occasion for many people and not the least for Mr. Barrington Dalby. "Barry" was at the Stadium to broadcast the fight but when word was received from Eugene Henderson (a great referee, in my opinion) that he was held up by snow storms and could not reach the Stadium in time, "Barry," as the only "star" referee present stepped in to referee the championship.

The date was February 1, 1940. Tarleton gave a masterly display of brainy boxing and was a worthy winner, even Johnny Cusick, good sport that he is, acknowledging the skill of the "Old Master."

When Barrington Dalby hoisted Tarleton's hand it was a signal for the greatest cheer the Stadium had ever heard and the ring was invaded by delirious spectators. Few of them knew how great Nel's triumph really was.

For this contest Nel had trained in the Stadium ring and was in the habit of winding up each session with a fast sprint round the hall's inner circle. Three days before the contest Nel was going at top speed when his foot caught the pedal of a bicycle that had been left leaning against the wooden barrier. He hit the concrete face first and was knocked unconscious. He was badly shaken and bruised but he never complained and refused to ask for a postponement—truly a champion.

CHAMPION'S FAREWELL

TARLETON'S last appearance at the Stadium took place on November 2, 1940, and it was fitting that in this, his final appearance on the scene of his many triumphs, he should give one of his finest displays. Defending his newly-won title against that excellent boxer, Tom Smith, of Sunderland, the younger man by a dozen years, Nel produced every move in the book and completely dominated the contest.

He dictated how the battle should be fought, foxed and baffled his younger opponent, who had been called a second Jim Driscoll by some of the critics, and, despite Smith's great rally in the 12th round, went on to a comfortable victory.

I doubt if we shall see a featherweight of Tarleton's class for many years. He had a wonderful boxing brain and his ring artistry was superb.

It may be said that he enjoyed physical advantages over the majority of his opponents. True he was extremely tall for a featherweight and possessed a good reach but it must not be forgotten that he had only one sound lung and often fought on sheer will power. His greatest asset was that he never had weight worries.

He always fought 'on the gate' and he was one of Liverpool's greatest drawing cards, equalled only by Peter Kane in that respect. He drew two gates of over 30,000 to Anfield against Freddie Miller and Al Brown.

WISHING ALL THE MEMBERS
AND FRIENDS OF THE BOXING
WORLD

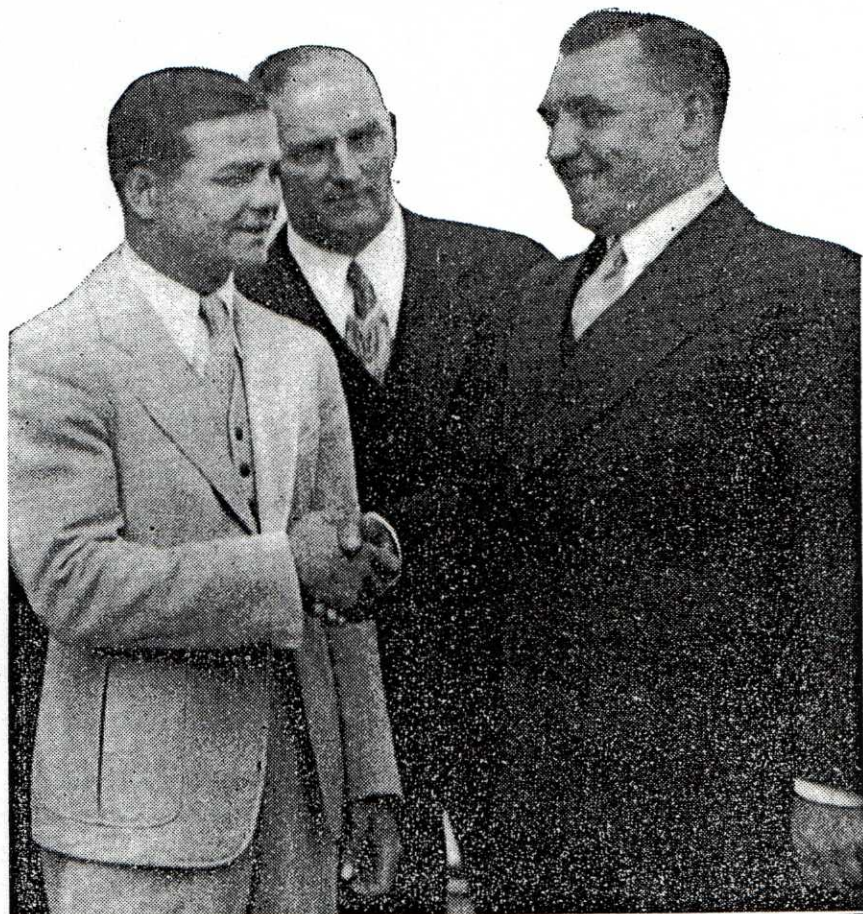
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U.S. 'SOUTHPAW' WAS MAGNET



It was all ship-shape when JOHNNY BEST went on board the liner to welcome FREDDIE MILLER to Liverpool for his world title fight with NEL TARLETON. It was one of the best bouts of the '30s, and Miller won.

Nel Tarleton and Eddie Miller Go To Lunch with the Lord Mayor

TARLETON'S two contests against Freddie Miller for his World's featherweight title were entirely different fights from the Al Brown affair. Miller, a "southpaw," was a strong, forceful fighter with a heavy punch. The first meeting drew 31,000 fans to Anfield and there was no doubt that Miller won. Nel had no grumble about the decision but to this day maintains (and thousands will agree with him) that he won the return at Stanley Track.

Miller was undoubtedly the most popular American boxer ever to visit Merseyside. The motto of Miller, and his manager, that grand person, Pete Reilly, was: "Little fish are sweet." Miller did not do a great deal of training in the gym. He always maintained that the best training was actual ring fights and he carried out his belief in this country.

He proved a boon to the small promoter and, world champion that he was, boxed for as little as £50. There was one occasion when, at a charity show, Miller refused to take any purse, lost on a foul and wound up by being fined £5 for hitting low.

History was made in Liverpool when the Lord Mayor entertained Miller and Tarleton to lunch at the Town Hall—a signal honour for boxing.

GENEROUS GESTURE

PETE REILLY, the old "Silver Fox of Bayridge," made a host of friends in Liverpool. I remember, when he was returning to America how he went into the Stadium, where the "chars" were cleaning up, and gave them each a note. No wonder they called him: "The manager with a million friends."

There was only one occasion on which

Miller ever disobeyed Reilly's orders. Pete had gone back to America, leaving Miller in Mr. Best's care. Miller's next contest was against Tommy Watson (now one of our leading referees).

Before the contest, Miller received instructions by cable from his manager on how he was to box against Watson. The contest took place at Anfield, before 12,000 fans in a torrential downpour of rain. Miller carried out Reilly's instructions to the letter and won, after a hard bout, on points.

Mr. John Mortimer, on behalf of Watson, issued a challenge for a return contest and £500 aside. Miller stated that, if Pete Reilly was agreeable, he would have the fight, and back himself. Reilly cabled agreement and the fight took place during Race Week, July, 1935.

Two weeks before the fight there arrived in Liverpool an American manager, Al Lippe, with two American fighters in tow, Phil Zwick and Vernon Cormier. Zwick subsequently remained in Liverpool for a long period and had many contests at the Stadium.

One night Lippe was sitting in a hotel lounge and overheard two racing men discussing the forthcoming contest. One wanted to lay odds that Miller could not K.O. Watson. Lippe asked him what odds he would lay and the reply was, "5 to 1." Lippe put his money down and the bet was made.

TIGHT SPOT

NEWS of this transaction came to Miller's ears and it put him in a tight spot for he had already received cabled instructions from Pete Reilly, which said: "Do not risk a K.O. Win on points." If Miller carried them out his good friend Al would lose his money.

The night before the contest, Miller, who was staying with Mr. Best, told him that he was going to disobey Reilly's orders. "I will try a punch on Watson and if it lands he will go out like a light. He won't see where it came from." Miller's prediction came true.

He scored a sensational K.O. in the second round with a punch that started near his ankle and, landing on Tommy's chin, lifted him clean off the floor. As the referee counted ten, Miller leapt over Watson's prostrate body, whooping like an Indian brave on the war-path.

Miller feared no fighter. There was the occasion when there was a big charity show being staged at Liverpool Stadium. The main attraction was a bout between Jackie Brown, world's flyweight champion, and an Italian, Cavagnoli. Just before the contest Brown had to cry off owing to illness. It was decided to put in a new top of the bill.

Miller and his manager were on the Continent, but Mr. Best got in touch with them and told Pete Reilly the situation. "O.K. We are catching the next plane."

No question about weight or purse. And this despite the fact that Stewart was one of the hardest punching lightweights in the country. Although considerably outweighed, Miller registered a points' win.

Over at Barcelona, Miller fought Jose Girones, then holder of the European featherweight title. Miller won on a foul. The Spaniard, who had looked good, wanted Miller to put up his title in a return match.

Reilly was quite agreeable but his terms were unusual. He wanted so much if Miller won but three times as much if he lost. Pete wasn't taking any chances.

Before 40,000 excited Spaniards in the Bull Ring, Miller proved himself a real champion. He K.O'd Girones with one punch.

TOP DRAW FOR MERSEYSIDE

BOXER who drew the biggest crowd ever to witness a boxing match on Merseyside was Peter Kane. His World flyweight title bout with Jacky Jurich, in which Kane outpointed the little fellow from San Jose, attracted 36,000 fans to Liverpool Football Ground.

To the powerful little fellow with the Eddie Cantor eyes, the Liverpool Stadium ring was "Home." It was in that ring he started on his amazing climb to the top and the majority of his contests were staged there.

Before he had his first professional contest, against the Manchester flyweight, Joe Jacobs, Peter used to come across from his native Golborne to the People's Hall, Aigburth, where Ginger Foran was then training.

Here he caught the eye of Foran's manager, Ted Denvir, who immediately got in touch with Mr. Best. The Stadium promoter came up to the gym, and after seeing him in action predicted he would win a title.

Even as a six rounder, Peter was a magnet on Merseyside. He was a better attraction as a preliminary fighter than many of the present top liners. His terrific punching power and his likeable personality won the admiration of Liverpool fans.

After his first win, against Joe Jacobs, on December 13, 1934, he went through 1935 without defeat, scoring twelve successive wins at Liverpool Stadium, all inside the



KID BERG shakes hands with JIMMY WALSH at the weigh-in before their fight for the lightweight championship in Liverpool, on April 24, 1936. Jimmy stopped him in nine rounds, so the Kid was another victim of the Graveyard of Champions.



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distance. The following year he had fifteen contests, winning them all

His greatest win that year was over Valentin Anglemann, an exceedingly tough and capable Frenchman, who was out-pointed over 12 rounds at Liverpool Stadium.

NO NERVES AT ALL

I JOURNEYED to Paris with Peter shortly afterwards for his return bout with the Frenchman and you have my word for it that he is entirely without nerves.

Peter found conditions in Paris strange and for the first couple of nights did not sleep soundly. The night before the contest we decided to go to a late cinema show. I remember Peter was seated behind a French lady who was wearing a large feather in her hat. Peter was nearly cross-eyed trying to see the film and if he had possessed a pair of scissors I am sure he would have removed the feather.

That night he slept like a top and the following evening made a lasting impression in Paris when he again out-pointed Anglemann. He was the most popular English boxer to appear in the French capital since Johnny Cuthbert and everywhere there were pictures and articles about "le petit forgerou," as they called Peter.

Peter continued his onward march to-

wards Benny Lynch and the World title. He beat the Spaniard, Ortega, at Anfield, before 12,000 fans in an overweight match, stopped Phil Milligan to gain the Northern flyweight title and was then matched with Jimmy Warnock in the final eliminating contest for Benny Lynch's British and World flyweight crowns.

Warnock, a fast clever "southpaw," had already outpointed Lynch in an overweight bout at Belfast and was re-matched with the champion at Glasgow. Meanwhile he had signed to meet Kane, at Liverpool. Warnock's contest with the great little Scot was, therefore, awaited with anxiety in Liverpool but the Irishman, after a shaky start, settled down to score an excellent points' win.

For his meeting with Kane, hundreds of wildly excited Irishmen, complete with shillelaghs, favours and rattles were on the Stadium doorstep on the morning of the fight and slept inside the hall until the time came for the weigh-in at 2 p.m.

That night 35,000 fans came through the Anfield turnstiles to witness Kane in devastating form. He carried too many guns for the game Irishman and stopped him in four rounds.

★

TWO months later he reached his goal, the championship, only to find himself up against a Lynch who touched the

36,000 SEE KANE WIN TITLE

heights that night at Shawfield Park. In one of the greatest flyweight battles ever seen in Great Britain, Kane went down to defeat in 13 pulsating rounds. Kane was glorious, for he had to recover from a shattering right-hand punch which dropped him within a few seconds of the opening bell.

Undeterred by this setback, Kane met Lynch in a return bout five months afterwards at Anfield. It was an overweight match and Lynch came in several pounds above the stipulated weight. It was another thrilling battle with the referee's decision being a draw. Personally, I thought Kane had won.

Lynch then contracted to defend his title against Jacky Jurich, who had been brought to this country by likeable Johnny Rogers, who recently brought Manuel Ortiz here. Lynch was overweight at the weigh-in and forfeited his title. Mr. Best got busy and succeeded in matching Kane with Jurich and had the bout recognised as being for the World's flyweight title.

Thirty-six thousand spectators witnessed the fight and saw Kane gain a clear cut points win. Very few knew that the contest was nearly called off on the day of the fight. Jurich was in pain with severe toothache, but decided to go through with the fight. As one side of his face was swollen, a wad of chewing gum was pressed into the opposite cheek so that the swelling would not be noticed.

Increasing weight forced Peter to relinquish his title but during the war he decided to get down to 8 st. again and eventually faced Paterson for the World and British titles, but was knocked out in one round. Peter's come-back after the end of the war is still fresh in memory. He won the European title from Medina but lost it to Ferracin.

There is still a strong possibility that he will once more duck under the ropes. He has been a great fighter, one of the best flyweights we have ever had and he certainly wrote quite a few pages of Liverpool Stadium history.

his opinion that Roderick would not touch his best form for a year. If you look at the record books you will observe the in-and-out form Ernie experienced in that year 1934.

Roderick proved a wonderful performer. Like wine, he seemed to get better with the passing years. He has, of course, been involved in some of the greatest fights seen in recent years, particularly his gallant but unavailing attempt to wrest the world's welter title from Henry Armstrong.

However, the contest that sticks in my memory was one of his less important ones, a preliminary contest on an Anfield programme. His opponent was Roy Mills, of Sunderland. The fight did not last long, seconds, in fact, but it was the finish that is engraved in my mind.

Roderick caught Mills with a beautiful left hook, right out of the text book, and as Mills was falling, Roderick, with incredible speed, hit his man with at least three more left hooks before he touched the floor—an amazing display of punching.

In his long career which, at the time of writing is still in progress, Roderick engaged in some 60 contests at Liverpool. He developed into a brilliant boxer and a master tactician. To the student of boxing he has always been a joy to watch. It is a tribute to his early coaching that his skill has stood the test of time and the assaults of some of the best fighters in the world.

Ernie is a very rare visitor to a ring-side. Outside of his actual training he is not much interested in boxing. He has his own hobbies which include the training of homing pigeons and the breeding of rats and mice.

Like Peter Kane, he has never worried over a fight. In training there was always one sure way of knowing how he felt. His trainer, George Tarleton always says: "Everything is going fine. Ernie has started to grumble."

IN CAME A CHAMPION

ONE of the only two boxers to beat Roderick in that most successful period of his career, from 1935 until early 1939, was Jimmy Walsh, the Chester lightweight.

Around 1932, fired with the ambition to become a professional boxer, Walsh walked the 16 miles from Chester to Dom and Tony Vairo's gym, at Transport House, Liverpool. "I'm Jimmy Walsh," he said, "and I want to be a boxer." Dom and Tony put him through his paces and were

Two Champions Battle It Out With Nazi Bombers Overhead

ON the afternoon of September 21, 1940, some 5,000 spectators assembled at Anfield to witness a contest between the Liverpool holder of the British welter title, Ernie Roderick, and Eric Boon, the British lightweight champion.

The actual contest saw Roderick score a convincing win over the hard-punching Chatteris boxer, but it was the circumstances surrounding the contest that made it memorable. The contest took place during a German air raid on Liverpool and despite the fact that the guns opened up and planes were seen over the ground, not a soul moved from the ringside.

Jack Solomons, who was with Boon, asked if the fight would be stopped and the answer was: "The only way it will be stopped is by the Germans dropping bombs on it"—which expressed the spirit of those stirring times.

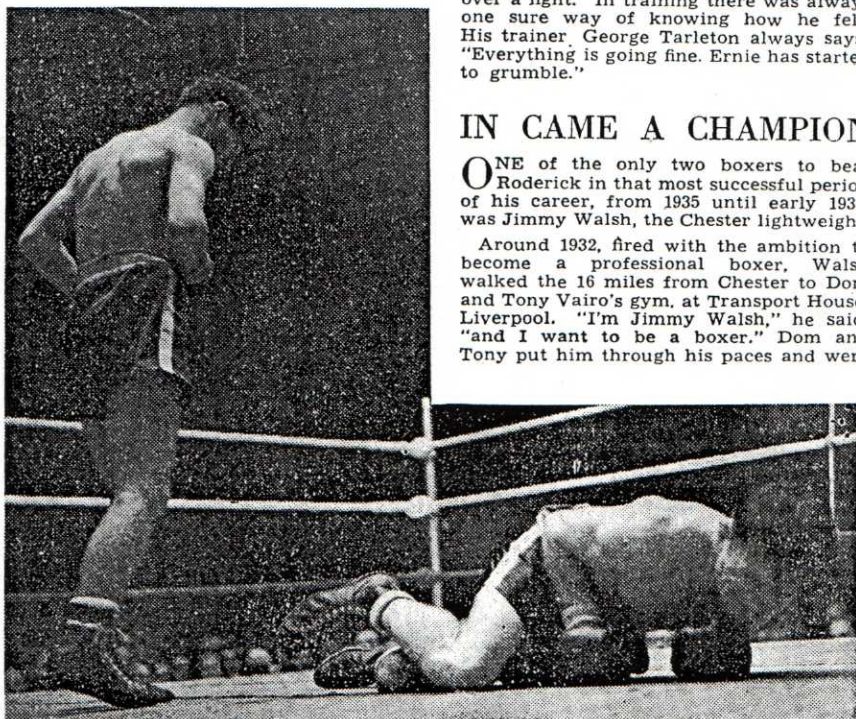
Ernie, like his manager and brother-in-law, Nel Tarleton, had come to the top through the hard testing ground of the Stadium. His first fight had been at the Lyric Theatre, in 1931. It took him until 1939 to gain the British title but in that time he learned his job and once he got on top he stayed there.

AUSTRALIAN TRIP

A TRIP that had a profound affect on Roderick's career was the one which he took to Australia, in company with Nel Tarleton and Johnny Peters in 1933. One fight there was a particularly hard one, and some days later he was walking along a Sydney street when he spied his name on a poster.

It was the poster advertising his previous fight but Ernie turned to Nel and said: "Why didn't you tell me you had fixed me up for this fight." Nel explained that he had already had the fight, but Ernie could not remember it at all.

He was taken to a doctor who diagnosed concussion. The doctor also gave it as



Another great title bout at the Liverpool Stadium in the post-World War II. period was that between RONNIE CLAYTON and EDDIE MILLER for the Empire featherweight title, which Clayton won by a knock-out. Clayton is seen standing over his fallen opponent.

KID BERG FOUND IT UNLUCKY

Concluding The Great Story Of "The Graveyard Of Champions"

convinced that a champion in the making had walked into their lives.

It was Jimmy who brought off what I have always considered the prize upset at Liverpool Stadium. This was when he halted the all-conquering march of Harry Mizler, Walsh, who was only a featherweight at the time, was given little chance against the clever Londoner but he came through with an amazing display to earn the verdict.

Jimmy went on to score many fine wins in the Stadium, to win the lightweight title from Jack "Kid" Berg. Previous to this he had put up a really great show against Freddie Miller, shaking the American on several occasions with terrific rights to the jaw.

He won against that other splendid American, Wesley Ramey, but lost on points to Nel Tarleton, after having Nel down for a long count, one of the very few which Nel has ever taken. He also beat Jimmy Stewart.

His win over Berg was his greatest triumph. He brought Chester its first and only British title when he stopped Berg in the 9th round after a ding-dong battle. London fans saw him successfully defend his title against Harry Mizler on the opening night of the rejuvenated N.S.C. at the Empress Hall, Earls Court. But it was a Londoner, perky little Dave Crowley, who eventually captured the title from Walsh, at Liverpool.

Jimmy was one of the sensible ones. He held on to his money and is a shrewd business man. As a boxer he had few trimmings but he was a sound performer, tough and solid. He feared no one.

UNLUCKY FOR BERG

LIVERPOOL Stadium was an unlucky venue for Kid Berg for he lost there also to Jimmy Stewart in a fight that is still discussed on Merseyside. Stewart was one of the hardest hitters ever developed in Liverpool and he stopped Berg in three sensation-packed rounds.

It must have been a great shock to "Yiddle" and to Ray Arcel, the American trainer, who was in his corner that night. Stewart looked a beaten man in round two, and Arcel was thoroughly justified in sending Berg out to finish him in the next round.

But Stewart often looked that way and was never more dangerous than when he appeared beaten. As Berg came in to finish him, he ran into a Stewart "special," a powerful right to the chin, which dropped Berg for nine.

He managed to get up only to run into a similar punch which again dropped him for nine. He struggled up once more with his back to the ropes but before Stewart could land again, slumped to the floor. Referee Ben Green wisely halted the fight for Berg, one of the greatest boxing ambassadors we have ever sent to America, was all-in.

Stewart received many offers to go to America after this triumph but he refused them all. He had a good job in the publishing department of a local newspaper and meant to keep it. He is still there and now takes a great interest in a boys' boxing club.

HARD TO BEAT

A PART from the Berg fight, Stewart's greatest win was over Douglas Parker. This, by general consent, is voted the most thrilling contest ever seen in the new Stadium. For sheer concentrated thrills and murderous punching it would be hard to beat.

I well remember the strip of photos in the newspapers the next morning showing first Stewart, then Parker, then Stewart and finally Parker on the canvas. Stewart afterwards confessed that there were many things in the battle of which he knew nothing. "I just stayed there punching and punching," said Jimmy.

Looking back over the years and recalling the boys who have made their way to the top at the Stadium, I think a better name for the hall would be the "Cradle of Champions." It has been the building up of champions and near-champions that has been the Stadium's best contribution to British boxing.

SONS OF THE STADIUM

THINK, for a moment, of some of the fighters who have come up through this great arena: Tarleton, Roderick Kane, Ginger Foran and Joe Curran (all of whom fought for world titles) Jimmy Walsh, lightweight champion, Stan Rowan, British and Empire bantam champion, Ronnie Clayton, who won the Triple crown in Liverpool, Stan Hawthorne, Peter Fallon, Dick Burke, Bert Jackson, Jimmy Molloy, Johnny Molloy and a score of others. The "nursery" is proud of them.

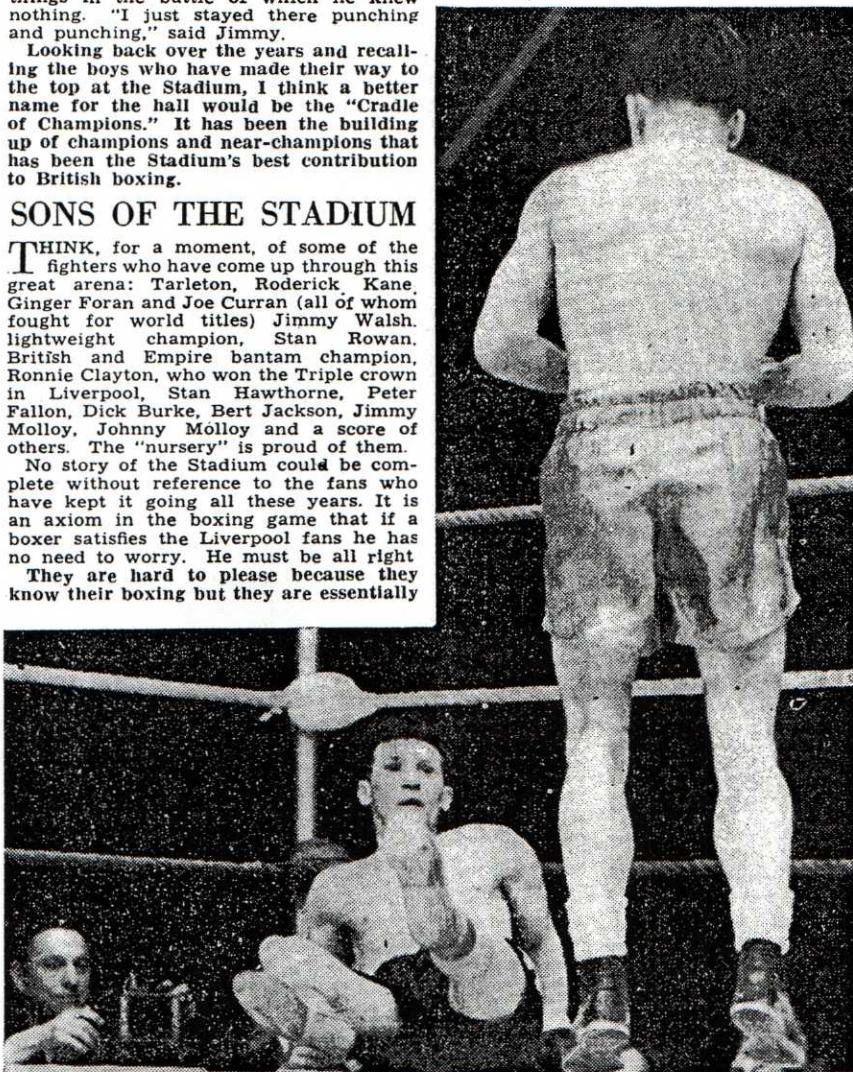
No story of the Stadium could be complete without reference to the fans who have kept it going all these years. It is an axiom in the boxing game that if a boxer satisfies the Liverpool fans he has no need to worry. He must be all right.

They are hard to please because they know their boxing but they are essentially

a fair crowd. In many other towns everyone is for the local boxer. Not so in Liverpool. A fighter is judged on his ability and the show he puts up. It doesn't matter where he comes from.

Finally, a word about the staff, nearly every one of whom has held the job since the old Stadium days. Benny Carter, Stadium manager and a great character, cool, even-tempered and full of the joy of living; Johnny Wright, his assistant, ex-boxer who fought for the flyweight championship of Scotland; Alf McEvoy, ringmaster and an authority on all things fistic; stadium seconds, Billy Davies, Ike Bradley, Mick Howard and Nat Williams; timekeeper Ernie Dean; hall manager Billy Mathews, and the dozens of others who live for boxing and the Stadium.

Liverpool Stadium has been an essential part of British boxing for close to forty years but in the words of the poet, may we hope that "The best is yet to be?"



STAN ROWAN, another great Liverpool fighter, looks grimly down on JACKIE PATERSON, after flooring him in their British and Empire bantam title bout at the Stadium, which he won comfortably, in 1948.

BOXING'S ROOTS WERE DEEP

Those of you who have seen the film "Tap Roots" will recall the old gnarled tree around which was built the story of the film—the history of a family on whose estate the tree grew—and will remember how, when the tree is destroyed, the tap roots remain so that the tree will grow again. It struck me that the history of Liverpool Stadium is very much like that of the old tree.

When, in March, 1931, the old Liverpool Stadium in Pudsey Street had to close its doors to boxing to make way for a modern cinema, it appeared that boxing had lost for ever one of its great names and strongest bulwarks. But the roots were buried deep.

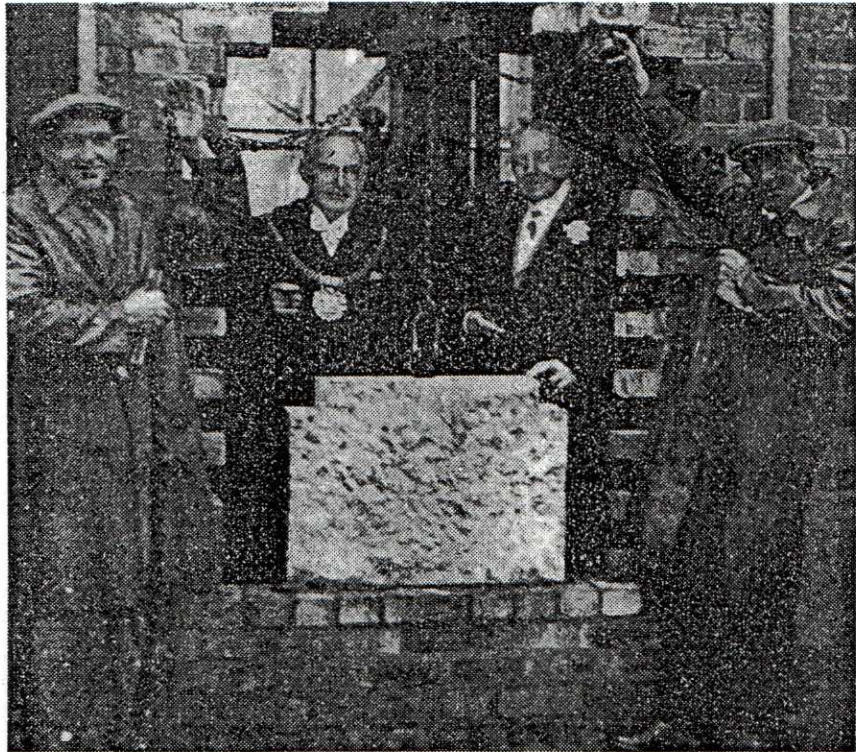
Inside 16 months the foundation stone of a new Liverpool Stadium had been laid by Lord Lonsdale. A few months later the hall was ready for boxing. It had been erected, appropriately enough, on the site of an old graveyard in St. Paul's Square.

The old Stadium in Pudsey Street opened its doors in 1911, but boxing had flourished on Merseyside long before that. There had been boxing at Midgehall Street, the old Gymnastic Club in Dale Street, at Pembroke Place, at the old Adelphi in Christian Street and across the river at Birkenhead. stalwarts such as Harry Thorne, Dan Wheligan and Mr. Harrison staged regular shows and national and international boxers were seen in action including the Americans, Philadelphia Jack O'Brien and Bart Connolly.

FAVOURITE SON

THE Adelphi (later re-named the Arena) opened for boxing in 1902 and was the scene of many historic battles. It was there that Freddie Welsh, later to bring the World's lightweight title to Britain, had one of his earliest fights. It was the scene, too, of many of the early contests of one of Liverpool's most beloved sons, Ike Bradley.

"Ike," a walking encyclopaedia of matters fistic, rates a volume of his own. If ever you visit Liverpool Stadium you'll see Ike in one of the corners doing his job as Stadium second. You can't miss him. His face is a cartoonist's dream, a real



LORD LONSDALE, accompanied by MR. "JIMMY" CROSS, the Lord Mayor of Liverpool, who did so much for boxing in that city, get together to lay the foundation stone of the new Liverpool Stadium way back in the good old days of 1932.

fighting face if ever there was one—flat nose, beetle brows, heavy jowled—carrying the scars of 400 ring battles. But he is as lively as a cricket and twice as chirpy.

Ike is one of the best known characters on Merseyside with a thousand friends from every walk of life. Those who saw him in action rate him the greatest bantam Liverpool has ever produced, even though he never won a title.

He went to America for a bout with Franky Neill, the bantam champion, but was never lucky enough to get the match. Instead he had to give weight to such great featherweights as Tommy O'Toole, Al Delmonte and Tommy Langdon. He went 20 sizzling rounds with Digger Stanley for the world's bantam title.

But the stories about Ike would fill a

book. One which must be recorded, for the light it throws on boxing conditions 40 years ago, is the story of Ike's contest against Sam Russell, now one of our star referees.

I had a chat with Sam recently. He chuckled as he recalled that riotous occasion, for riotous it certainly was. "You must tell the story," said Sam, "it's too good to miss."

MASQUERADE

THE year was 1910; the place the old Arena in Christian Street. Ike Bradley's original opponent was Young Cohen, of Aldgate, a first class fighting man, managed by Bill Ames, who many years later promoted the famous Tommy Harrison-Charles Ledoux contest at Liverpool Stadium, in partnership with Norman Hurst, now one of our top boxing writers.

Young Cohen sustained an injury and was unable to appear, so Bill Ames got hold of Sam Russell, who was then boxing as Young Russell, and persuaded him not only to take the place of Young Cohen, but to take his name, too.

They made the journey to Liverpool, and Sam was introduced to the promoter, Mr. Harrison, as Young Cohen. Mr. Harrison was heard to remark that Cohen was pretty tall for a bantam. Having regard to Sam's height, Mr. Harrison's remark wasn't surprising.

As they were leaving the building, Dom Vairo (now a well-known manager) who was with Ames and Russell, saw Ike in the distance. Sam was wearing a long overcoat and he was immediately instructed to bend his knees and make himself look as small as possible.

JACK KING

**BOXING'S BEST-KNOWN AND
BOXING'S LEADING MATCHMAKER**

Conveys Kindest Greetings To One
And All In The Fight Game, And
Hopes That 1950 Will See The

BIGGEST BOXING BOOM EVER!

THOSE DAYS WERE TOUGH!



In 1906 a boxers' eleven (which included Lonsdale Belt holders) challenged the victorious Everton team, who had won the Football Association Cup. This fine 44-year-old picture shows the boxers in all their soccer glory, and their handlers, on the football field. Reading from left to right they are (standing): JOE DURHAM, SEAMAN HAYES, JOHNNY SUMMERS, JERRY DELANEY, GORDON SIMS (goalkeeper), J. HARRIS, J. WEBB, JOHNNY BEST and BADOUD the Belgian boxer. Seated are BANDSMAN RICE, BILLY WELLS, MAJOR A. WILSON, JOHNNY BASHAM and TANCY LEE.

Introductions were made. As Ike shook hands with Sam he gave a hard pull and nearly put Sam on his face. On seeing Sam's real height, Ike grinned. He never worried over much about whom he fought or how big they were. He brought up a family of six sons and three daughters and boxing was his bread and butter.

Aside to Dom Vairo, Ike muttered: "If I hit Cohen on the chin, I'll break his neck."

When they entered the ring, the difference in the height of the two men caused considerable comment. Ike decided that his best plan was to make Sam's body his target. This he proceeded to do. However, in the first round, Russell kept him at the end of his long left and won the round.

K.O. FOR THIRD MAN

IN round two, Ike went to work and with Sam pinned on the ropes floored him for a count of eight with a body punch. Sam got to his feet, only to be floored by a similar punch. He claimed that this was a low blow. The referee agreed with him and promptly disqualified Ike.

Pandemonium broke loose. Ike was fighting mad and before anyone could stop him, let fly with one of his "specials," which landed on the object of his anger, the referee. That unfortunate official hit the canvas with a crash.

When order was finally restored, Ike came back to apologise, but he still maintained he'd been robbed.

Britain's Hottest Fight Town Has Memories Of Pickled Hands

THOSE were the tough days of British boxing—4 oz. gloves (often, after wear, skin tight) pickled hands and faces, small purses and no Board of Control. Boxing was not considered respectable. The gentry would put on a cloth cap and slip a scarf around the neck before venturing into a fight arena.

It was left to one man to elevate the game in Liverpool—Mr. Arnold Wilson, later Major Arnold Wilson. Always a lover of boxing, the Major used to drop in at a poky little cellar, not a stone's throw from the old Stadium, where two youngsters used to train together.

The two boys were Johnny Best and Nat Williams. Nat, managed by Johnny Best, blossomed into a very fine featherweight and later fought draws against Ted "Kid" Lewis and Johnny Basham.

It was in this cellar that Major Wilson broke into the game. It was there, too, that he often donned the gloves for a spar. It is recalled that he attended his brother's wedding sporting a lovely "shiner" received in the gym a few night's before.

HIS BIG IDEA

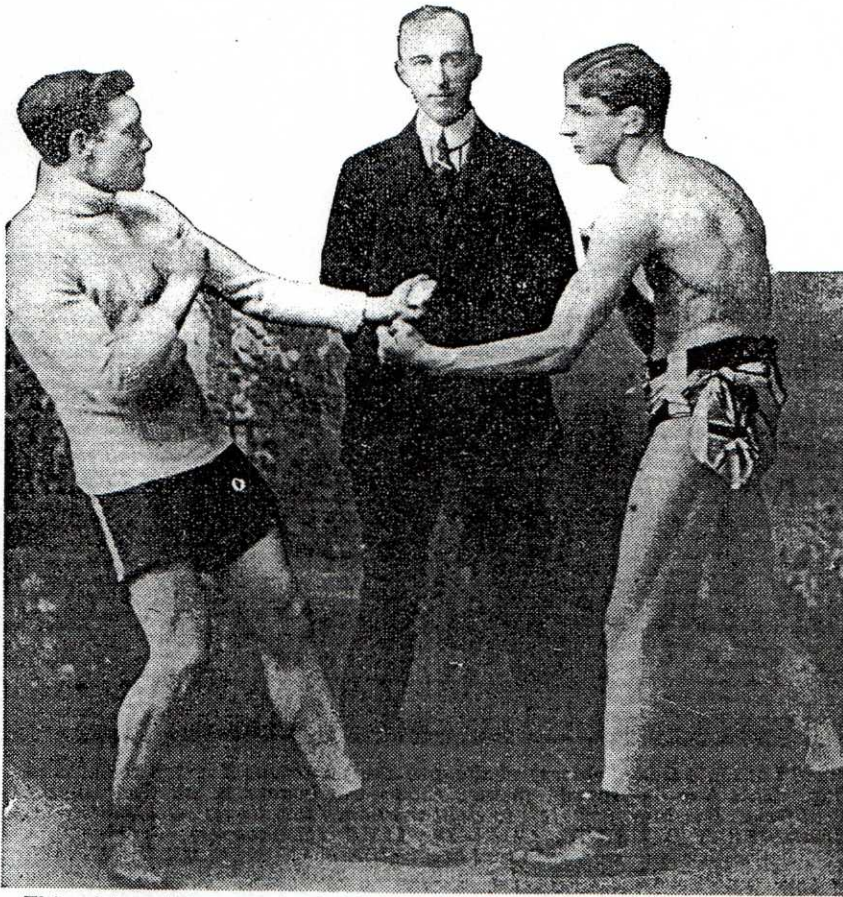
MAJOR WILSON had a fresh slant on the game and was full of new ideas, big ideas, the idea of a new hall for boxing in Liverpool. Eventually his idea became reality.

Roller skating, which had been enjoying a boom, was losing interest and Major Wilson had the notion of staging boxing in the big skating rink in Pudsey Street named the Albert Hall. He got together a small group of local business men and formed a company to stage boxing there.

Mr. Harrison, then in charge of the Arena at Christian Street, was made matchmaker, but retired after a few months. Major Wilson took over the job. Under his able direction the Stadium grew in reputation. He presented some of the world's outstanding boxers.

Leaving the Stadium to join the Welch Regiment early in 1915, he became a Major and won the Military Cross. Later he

STADIUM'S ROLL OF FAME



This picture takes you back 30 years, and shows JOHNNY BEST sparring with one of the best fighters ever discovered in Liverpool, the clever NAT WILLIAMS, who fought a draw with "Kid" Lewis and Johnny Basham. In the centre is MAJOR ARNOLD WILSON, for so long associated with the Stadium.

staged in London contests which made fistic history, including the Carpentier-Beckett bout at Olympia, which drew £26,000—a huge gate at that time.

★

QUITE recently I discovered some relics of the old Stadium, among them a number of scrap books into which were pasted hundreds of programmes and handbills. The names on them were to me—just names, but what names.

They called for a roll of drums: Freddy Welsh, Johnny Basham, the Dixie Kid, Johnny Summers, Digger Stanley, Harry and Willie Lewis, Eugene Criqui, Young Ahearn, Tommy Harrison, Gus Platts, Joe Fox, Bill Beynon, Walter and Francis Rossi, Walter Ross, Tancy Lee, Eddie Beattie, Arthur Townley, Billy Wells, Jerry Delaney, Fred Blakeborough (now one of our best referees), Hughie Mehegan, Kid Lewis, Seaman Hayes, Percy Jones, Badoud, Joe Borrell, Boy McCormick, Jack Hood, Jimmy Wilde (perhaps the greatest of them all), and a hundred others.

Liverpool Stadium fans regarded Jimmy Wilde as one of their own. He made a reputation in Liverpool long before he was known in London. They called him "The Mighty Atom," "The Ghost with the hammer in his hand."

It was different when he made the long

journey from his Welsh valley to Liverpool for his first contest at the old barn-like arena in Pudsey Street. This thin wisp of a boy, weighing not much over 6 st., with pipe-stem arm and legs, looked much too frail to be a fighter.

They say there were those who laughed when he ducked under the ropes and called out: "Look out, here comes Indian Famine." The wags were silenced when the bell sounded and the little Welshman went into action. Before the contest was over the fans realised they had seen a phenomenon, a boxing genius, the like of whom, by general consent, we haven't seen since.

THE "MIGHTY ATOM"

WILDE came back to Liverpool often after that first contest and fought some of his most memorable contests at the Stadium. I have an idea the bout that would be voted top of the list on Merseyside was Jimmy's affair with Tommy Noble. That was the occasion when the old "Graveyard of Champions" nearly claimed Wilde as a victim, when the "Mighty Atom" came as near to defeat as ever he did in his long and brilliant career.

It happened in 1916, November 9 to be exact. At that time there was a first class little bantam, hailing from Leeds, named Luis Ruddick, who had captivated the

affections of Liverpool fans a few months before by beating Tommy Harrison. Although he outweighed Wilde considerably, a match between Wilde and Ruddick was a "natural" and had box office written all over it.

Ted Lewis, the shrewd old mentor of Jimmy Wilde, knew the danger, however, and insisted that the weight should be 8 st. 4 lb., a weight he believed Ruddick would have great difficulty in making. Bill Ames, who was managing Ruddick, agreed to the weight and the contracts called for a £50 weight forfeit.

The match aroused tremendous interest in Liverpool boxing circles and although ringside tickets were priced at a guinea (quite a high price at that time), they sold like the proverbial hot cakes.

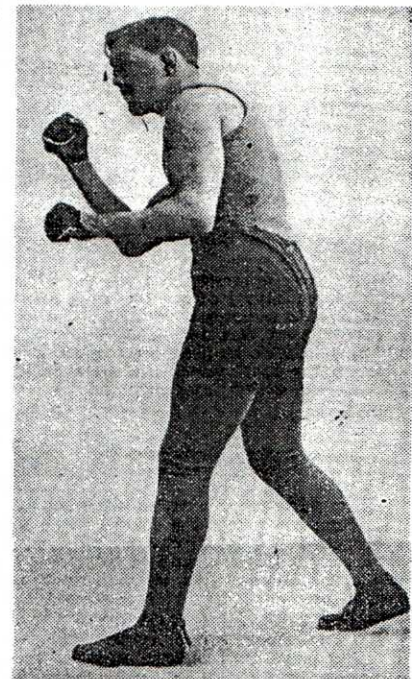
However, the keenly anticipated contest did not materialise. Ted Lewis's surmise had been correct and Ruddick had to withdraw a few days before the fight owing to his inability to make the required 8 st. 4 lb. In Ruddick's place came Tommy Noble, a hard hitting little fellow from that hotbed of fighters, Bermondsey.

IMPARTIAL RECORD

HERE is the story of the contest as recorded by that great referee, the late Jack Smith.

"Those patrons whose disappointment at Ruddick's failure to meet Jimmy Wilde caused them to stay away from the Stadium were grievously disappointed when they heard how close the substitute, Tommy Noble, of Bermondsey came to putting a second defeat (Tancy Lee was at that time the only man who had beaten Wilde) against the record of the "Terror."

"It is safe to say that the great little Jimmy has never been nearer to defeat



GUS PLATTS, one of those fighters who never reached top honours, was one of the Liverpool favourites in the period just after the first world war.

"FOUL" CRY IN FIFTH ROUND

than he was on Thursday. What made it more exciting was the fact that up to the 12th round it was all over bar the shouting.

"The 11th round stage was watched wondering whether the Londoner would pass it and so improve upon the distance he went in his last meeting with Wilde. He not only passed it, but improved in such a manner as to rouse excitement to a pitch rarely seen in the Stadium before.

"Noble started the bout well and to my reckoning won the opening round. But he did not maintain the form in the second and Wilde found him with those difficult long arm swings to the body. After this Wilde put two rights to the jaw and a long swing to the body and Noble fell down for seven.

"Noble was down again for seven seconds early in the third round, but came back to exchange blows till he was put down by a nice clip to the jaw, when the bell came as a welcome relief. Noble looked beaten.

"He improved during the interval and boxed well in the next round, though his good defence was spoiled by too much clinching. His improvement appeared to give Noble a bit more confidence, and he did very nicely in the fifth until a left hand blow from Wilde slowed him.

"Some of the crowd yelled for a foul, but no claim came from the Londoner. There was not a great deal between them in the next few rounds, although Noble's work was spoiled by his tendency to hold

manner that made one wish he had done so earlier. Although Noble's effort resulted in his downfall, it is by no means certain it would have been so had he chanced his arm when he was stronger.

"The round presented Wilde in his best light, taking part in free exchanges when, by his marvellous judgment, he always managed to give more than he received. Noble, cutting loose, just gave Wilde the opportunity he had been looking for and, the moment he showed willing, Wilde stood and mixed.

"Noble had the worst of the rally, but he charged after the Welshman, who, with deliberate precision, twice scored to the jaw with his right, Noble going down for seven. Noble continued the attack when he got up and he was again twice severely caught and put down for 7 and 8.

"The last count looked good enough for a finish but Noble climbed to his feet with surprising energy and went after Jimmy again. Though one could hardly expect it, he was certainly dangerous in his despairing effort, but the way Wilde stood close in and dodged the blows and scored with his own, was equal to the best he has previously done.

"Any one of Noble's punches would have toppled Jimmy over, but somehow Wilde evaded them and, suddenly diverting his attention downstairs, Wilde put a terrific right to the mark which sent

Noble right across the ring into his own corner, where he hung with both arms over the top rope a thoroughly beaten man. The referee wisely intervened and stopped the bout in Wilde's favour."

Incidentally, Mr. Johnny Best, who was a Stadium second in those days, was in Wilde's corner. Later he had the opportunity of boxing an exhibition with the great Welshman and recalls the terrific power of Wilde's punching.

THEY WERE TOUGH

IT is a reflection on the change the game has undergone since those times, that exactly seven days after his gruelling 15 rounds with Wilde, Noble stepped into the Stadium ring for a 15 rounds contest against Tancy Lee. Noble on this occasion lasted 12 rounds, when the dour little Scot put him down for the full count.

As the game is governed now, no Boxer would be permitted to undertake two such lengthy contests in that space of time. Yet it was by no means uncommon at that time and there are many recorded examples of substitutes travelling 20 rounds. In fact, Alf McEvoy, who has officiated for many years as Stadium whip, recalls stepping out of the audience at Oswestry, during the first World War, and travelling the 20 rounds route.

CRITICAL 12th ROUND

"NOBLE shaped well in the 12th and, reaching home with a light left, he suddenly shot a hard right to the jaw and the house went mad as Wilde was seen to stagger. Noble jumped after his man in a trice and, raining a volley of blows on Wilde's protecting arms, he managed to get another right to the jaw and Wilde went to the floor looking bad.

"Wilde got to his feet and covered up. Noble carried his man to the ropes under the weight of his attack. Wilde was in a bad way, but the manner in which he handled himself was masterly, for even at the height of his difficulties, he stood up openly to draw Noble's punch in the hope of beating him in the exchange.

"Wilde was forced round the ring when Noble hooked a hard left to the jaw, and stumbled slightly but stood for another brief exchange. Noble, who was taking his chances, twice again reached the jaw with his right, but Wilde was coming back then and, just before the bell, was credited with two rights to the side of the head.

"Wilde improved during the interval. He forced the boxing but missed badly and, in an exchange of blows, Noble again found Jimmy on the jaw. Jimmy's feinting was not so effective as it had been and he was shaken by a hard left to the body as the round closed.

"Jimmy looked a trifle nettled as the 14th round opened and he went out to make the work. I thought he took too many chances in opening out with his right, but he evidently knew the power of Noble, for the latter fell away again and resorted to clinching and hugging.

NOBLE HAS A GO

"WHEN the 15th round opened Noble was evidently instructed to go in and have a fight, which he did in a

American Boxers Came To Stadium Without Any Publicity—And Stayed

IT is surprising, looking back at the old Stadium programmes, how frequently boxers from across the Atlantic made their appearance at Pudsey Street. There was none of the usual ballyhoo which nowadays heralds the approach of an American boxer. Their visits were an accepted occurrence and they would often remain on Merseyside for considerable periods.

The Dixie Kid, Harry and Willie Lewis, Alf Langford (who boxed on the opening night against Bandsman Rice), Bob Scanlon, Johnny Roser, Harry Stone, Fred Yelle, Noah Brusso, Blink McClosky, Artie Edwards, Young Pierce and Fred Sydney, were only a few of the many.

The Dixie Kid, whose real name was Aaron Brown, was a great Liverpool Stadium favourite. He came to England as a holder of the World's welterweight title by reason of his victory over the great Joe Walcott, and when it was learned that he was to defend his title against Johnny Summers at Liverpool Stadium, Merseyside fight fans besieged the box office.

Summers, a soft spoken, flaxen haired, good looking man, was one of the ring's gentlemen. He was deeply religious and never failed to attend church before a contest. On Merseyside he was regarded almost as a local. Major Wilson had such a high regard for Johnny's ability that he engaged him for a series of contests guaranteeing him an aggregate of £1,000.

The contracts for the Dixie Kid-Summers contest for the world's welterweight title called for a ringside weigh-in at 10 st. 2 lb. The date of the fight was November 17, 1911.

Summers was a first-class fighter. He had lost his British lightweight title bout against Freddie Welsh but it was commonly agreed that Summers was beaten

not so much by the wizardry of the great Welshman, as by the decision of the N.S.C., then the ruling body in British boxing, to change the lightweight title poundage from 10 st. to 9 st. 9 lb. In the process of boiling down to this new weight, Summers considerably weakened himself.

The weight for the Dixie Kid bout, however, suited him admirably. He trained at nearby Ormskirk and wound up his training in great shape, full of confidence—confidence which was shared by many local fight fans. This was a remarkable testimony to Summers's popularity considering his opponent's record.

A GREAT FIGHTER

THE Dixie Kid was one of the many great Negro boxers who dominated the fistic world at the time—Jack Johnson, Sam Langford, Joe Jeanette, Sam McVea and the like. As it happened Summers came very near to justifying the confidence of his followers for, in the opening round, he landed two punches, a left followed by a right to the jaw, which shook the Kid to the roots. Only the bell ending the first round prevented Summers following up his advantage against a dazed opponent.

With his shrewd and dapper manager, Charlie Galvin, to aid him in his corner, the Negro made a quick recovery in the interval. Galvin must have instructed him to go out and finish the fight as quickly as possible, for no sooner had the second round started than he let fly with a terrific right, the blow missing Johnny's jaw by the merest fraction.

STADIUM'S GREATEST FIGHT

Johnny should have taken warning but made over-confident, perhaps, by his success in the opening round he moved into the attack, making the Negro's body his target. The Kid moved back slowly and waited for an opening. He saw it and as Summers moved forward once more he hit him with a smashing left hook on the chin.

Summers went down as if pole-axed and there was never a hope of him beating the count. Johnny, great sportsman that he was, had no excuse. When he came to in his dressing room he asked his second, Johnny Best, what had happened. The punch was described to him and he said: "I thought I had that punch beaten. The Dixie Kid is a great fighter Give me a cigarette."

Yet, great boxer though the Negro undoubtedly was, he, too, fell a victim to the Stadium "hoodoo" on champions a short time afterwards. He was matched with a fellow-American, the happy-go-lucky, wise-cracking, Harry Lewis, who used to boast: "Boy, if I hit an opponent on the chin and he doesn't drop I go round to see what's holding him up."

ROOF COLLAPSED

His contest with the Dixie Kid goes on record as one of the greatest ever seen at the old Stadium. The Kid found in Lewis an opponent tougher than himself and was k.o'd in the 8th round—a tremendous shock to the local fans who thought him invincible. It was an occasion still remembered by the older followers of the game as the time when the Stadium's glass roof collapsed under the weight of a heavy fall of snow.

It was results like that of the Dixie Kid-Harry Lewis scrap which gained for the Stadium, its reputation as the "Graveyard of Champions." A boxer would establish himself by one of those unexpected victories; champions would be built up and then knocked down. They came to Liverpool at their peril

STOMACH ATTACKED

How near the great Freddie Welsh came to defeat at the Stadium! As near as did Wilde against Noble. The man that nearly did the trick (and there are many on Merseyside who still believe that he did in fact do so) was Eddie Beattie, a rugged character from Castlecary in Scotland.

Shortly before this contest Welsh had given an amazing display of ring artistry in outpointing the American, Jack Langdon, at Liverpool Stadium, and he was later to win the British title from Matt Wells and the World title against Willie Ritchie, of America.

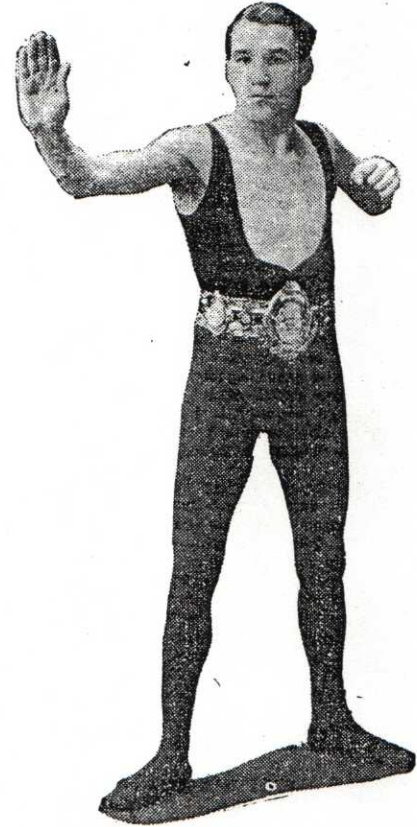
Beattie a regular performer at the Stadium, held his own for six rounds troubling Welsh with his stabbing left. In the seventh round, however, Welsh launched a furious attack and Beattie could do little against the speed of the Welshman's punching.

The sensation came in the ninth round. With both men exchanging blows furiously Beattie suddenly caught Welsh a terrific blow in the stomach. Welsh dropped to the floor, badly hurt. The referee, Mr. J. H. Douglas, did not start the count at once. He seemed uncertain whether the blow was legitimate or otherwise. Thus Welsh, amid a tremendous uproar, gained several valuable seconds, as Gene Tunney did against Jack Dempsey years later.

Welsh managed to get to his feet at "9" and thereafter, despite a sustained attack from the Scot, boxed coolly and never gave him another chance, winning on points

Liverpool, with its large Welsh population, has always had an especial welcome for boxers from the Principality. Nearly all the great Welshmen appeared at the old Stadium—Basham, Percy Jones, Llew Edwards, Bill Beynon, Jimmy Wilde, the Rossi Brothers.

Basham, in particular, was loved by



SID SMITH, the flyweight champion, who won his title at the old National Sporting Club, in London, by outpointing JOE WILSON over 20 rounds, in December, 1911, was a top-liner at the Old Stadium on several occasions. He died in 1948.

Liverpool boxing followers. Light-hearted, whimsical, happy-go-lucky Johnny was almost a local and although he hailed from Newport, he made his name in Liverpool and, in fact, was sometimes billed as being from Liverpool.

Johnny scored many magnificent victories at the Stadium, including wins over Eddie Beattie, Jack Langdon (America), Young Ahearn and the South African, Harry Price, who was killed in the contest with Basham.

WAR, THEN DECLINE

UNDER the able and talented direction of Major Wilson the Stadium acquired a reputation second only to the N.S.C. With the outbreak of World War I, Major Wilson joined the Colours and did not return to Liverpool. Instead, on being demobbed, he settled down in London where he eventually became the country's greatest promoter.

On Major Wilson's departure the direction of the Stadium boxing passed into the hands of "Pa" Taylor, who held the reins until 1928. For 10 years the game continued to flourish on Merseyside. Then a decline set in and interest fell away.

"Pa" did not enjoy the best of luck and there was one period when, for 26 consecutive weeks, he had to contend with substitutes in the main event. There came the day when the Stadium could no longer be carried on successfully as a boxing hall and was forced to close.

HARRY SHEPPARD

MANAGER OF CANADA'S ACE FIGHTERS

*Extends Cordial Greetings
To One and All
In the Fighting World*

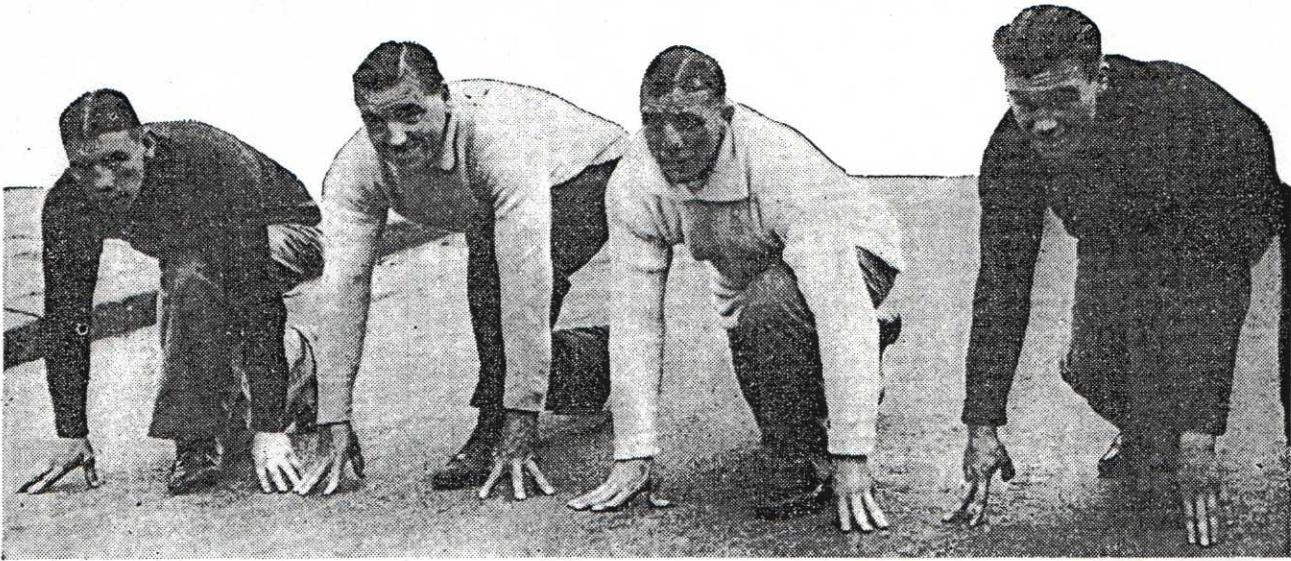
Managing :

- GEORGE ROSS
- ROY WOUTTERS
- MANNIE SPIVAK
- MEL BROWN
- FERNANDO GAGNON
- JEAN RICHARD
- DANNY WEBB
- SAMMY O'DARE
- MAXIE SPOON
- GABY FERLAND
- ROCKY BRISEBOIS, Etc.



All Communications : c/o "Ascot House," 52, Dean Street, London, W.

JOHNNY BEST TAKES OVER



Here's another picture that goes back to the inter-war days. It shows JOHNNY BEST getting down to it before the start of a training run with those famous Liverpool fighters, NEL TARLETON (left), DOM VOLANTE and ALF HOWARD.

The Game Was Dead But He Revived It And The Fans Poured In

WITH the boxing tide at low ebb Mr. Johnny Best decided, in the words of Mr. Pickles, to "Have a go." The Stadium had been offered as a venue for boxing to promoters in other parts of the country but none cared to take the risk. The game was dead in Liverpool and promoters knew the tough time they would have trying to revive it

AGAINST the advice of his friends. Mr. Johnny Best made his plans and decided to rent the hall. On January 10, 1929, the Liverpool Stadium re-opened for boxing. The top-liner was a 15-rounder between Dino Tempesti, of Italy, and Billy Streets, managed by Johnny Sharpe. Still one of our leading managers.

On the same bill, two local boys, George Belshaw and Jim Belcher fought a terrific duel. The opening show showed a profit of exactly £39. The struggle to capture the interest of the fans was a tough one and for six months it was touch and go.

Often in that period, Mr. Best was urged to cut his losses and get out but, if he lost his cash, he never lost his faith and eventually the tide turned. The fans came rolling back to the old stand and once again the "House Full" sign was dusted and hung out on many a Thursday night. Outstanding local attractions like Nel Tarleton, Dom Volante, Alf Howard, Harold Higginson and Dick Burke were developed and helped to build up the best regular audience in the country. Boxers from outside towns like Johnny Cuthbert, of Sheffield, and Jim Crawford, of Wrexham, were almost as popular as the locals.

Cuthbert, in fact, was the answer to a promoter's dream. He and his father were shrewd, canny Yorkshiremen, but they were the easiest of people with whom to do business. Johnny invariably fought "on the gate," and he would never worry who he fought as long as his opponent was someone good enough to draw a decent house.

Johnny would have fought Dom Volante

every week of the year because he knew that he and the great hearted Dom would always pack the Stadium. He was a clean, sporting boxer, and as popular in Paris as he was in Liverpool. A splendid character Johnny, and one of the wise ones who held on to his hard-earned purse money.

HISTORY IS MADE

HIS contest against Nel Tarleton for the British featherweight title and Lonsdale Belt made fistic history on Merseyside. It was the first Belt contest ever staged in Liverpool and the second to be staged in this country other than at the N.S.C. in London.

The contest broke all records for the Stadium and the spectators started to line up at 10 a.m. on the day of the fight. Lord Lonsdale was present to see a close, brilliant battle and Referee Charlie Thomas's decision was a draw—a decision which Nel, to this day, maintains he should have received.

Nel, however, obtained his revenge later at Anfield when he outpointed the Yorkshireman to win his first British title and belt and start the amazing sequence of title contests which ended with him winning two belts outright and retiring still the "champ." But I am running ahead of my schedule.

A great money-spinner at the old Stadium was Alf Howard. I have been watching boxing now for close on 30 years but I have never seen a more thrilling fighter than Howard. He had plenty of faults. For one thing he was a hard man to train.

In the ring he was scrupulously clean. I never remember him being guilty of

even the slightest infringement. He was not much of a boxer but, brother, how he could hit. He used to knock 'em as cold as mackerel.

I remember talking to Jack Hyams recently and recalling his fight with Howard. "How that fellow could punch," said Jack. "After the fight I had lumps all over my head and neck."

Howard won the European lightweight title at the Stadium against the Belgian, Francois Sybille. This contest was memorable, not for the fighting it produced, as it ended unsatisfactorily on a foul, but because it was the first and only occasion on which a contest in this country was fought under International Boxing Union rules. The referee was Count Volpi, later one of Mussolini's henchmen, and the two judges, M. Collard (Belgium) and Mr. Tom Gamble (England).

SMASH HIT

THE most thrilling contest of Howard's career was his fight against Harry Fenn. There are some who say it was for sheer drama the most unforgettable bout ever staged in the old Stadium.

For 12 rounds Fenn completely outboxed Howard. He dazzled him with left hands, shook him with rights to the jaw, had him on the floor and altogether gave him the father and mother of a hiding. So far behind was Howard that many of the fans left the hall.

Came the 13th round. Before the echoes of the bell had died away Howard was across the ring and had pinned Fenn in his own corner. That terrific right hand whistled through the air and landed on the Londoner's jaw. Fenn was all at sea and Howard showered a rain of blows on his unprotected jaw.

With Fenn helpless the referee called a halt. The roar of cheering nearly lifted the Stadium roof. Howard was like that. He could be completely outboxed and then, with one sizzling right hand, smash his opponent to the canvas.

Old Stadium fans will recall his contest against Haydn Williams, the Welshman. Williams had a few weeks before earned high praise by his display against Harry Fenn, and when he was paired with Howard the general opinion was that he would beat the local boxer.

Williams used to stamp his left foot on the ground as he delivered a left hand. He did a lot of stamping that night and Howard's face did a lot of catching. Then:

JOKE COST HIM THE FIGHT

wham! Over came that whistling right hand and the Welshman crashed on his face, as though someone had cut him at the knees with a great scythe.

MASON TURNS GREEN

A NOTHER great performance by Howard was the occasion, incredible though it sounds, when he outpointed that brilliant boxer, Harry Mason. Howard was fighting mad that night because of an incident which occurred at the weigh-in.

Mason, who used to play the violin, had many friends in the theatrical profession and a couple of them were performing that night at the Empire Theatre. At the weigh-in they asked Harry if he would be in time to see their act in the evening. Harry intimated that he was certain to be able to do so, as he did not anticipate Howard remaining in the ring for long.

Howard heard this and his temper rose to bursting point. On the night of the fight he came stalking down "Mugs Alley" like a raging lion, and the crowded house buzzed with anticipation.

Mason started off in the usual cool style which had made him one of our most brilliant boxers. Then over came that shattering right hand from Howard. It landed a little high but it sent Harry to the canvas.

I swear he turned green. How he managed to get up I don't know but get up he did. Howard dropped him several times afterwards but was not able to put him down for the full count. It speaks well for Mason's superlative skill that Howard was not able to do so.

OFF THE RECORD

HOWARD suffered one knockout that was never included in his record. It happened like this.

Around October, 1929, Mr. Johnny Best received a communication from a young coloured Canadian who was living in Cologne. At that time, although he had an excellent record, he was unknown in this country. His name was Larry Gains. Larry was lean in those days, like a sleek, black panther, and, in the ring, just as deadly.

Mr. Best met him when he arrived at Lime Street Station, and Larry expressed the wish to go to a gym and loosen up after his long journey. He was taken to



JACK KING (seen left of the scales), the well-known matchmaker, and manager of AL PHILLIPS was the only one who did not smile when this photograph was taken at the weigh-in before the Phillips-Clayton bout. Next to him is BEN SCHMIDT, promoter of many successful post-war contests. Clayton narrowly won the bout after 15 hectic rounds in 1947.

the old Greenside Club where Alf Howard was training.

As I have said, Howard was a marvellous puncher but like many another he was the type who could never "pull" a punch, even in the gym.

Knowing this, Mr. Best took Alf aside when the Liverpool boxer expressed a wish to spar with Gains, and warned him thus: "Listen, Alf, you've never heard of Gains, but take my word for it he is a high-class fighter and he is stonier heavier than you. Don't try to knock him out, or you will be in trouble. Box three rounds with him and you will learn a lot."

They sparred around for a few seconds and then over came that right hand. Gains just moved his head and the blow whistled by his ear. Gains gave him a quizzical look.

Another few seconds' sparring and over it came again. Gains slipped it once more.

A third time Howard tried the punch. This time Gains slipped it and countered with a short punch which landed on Alf's chin. He went out like a light. Alf took it in good part and blamed nobody but himself.

Howard had his ups and downs but he gave me, at any rate, more thrills in the ring than any other fighter. He fought some good class men—Sybille Gustave Roth, Harry Corbett, Fred Webster, Benny Valgar (America) and Jack Hyams. His brother, Mick, also a fighter, is now a Stadium second.

RIVALS AND FRIENDS

TWO of the greatest and most popular boxers in the history of Liverpool boxing helped considerably to revive interest on Merseyside, Ned Tarleton and Dom Volante. Keen rivals, they fought each other four times, Dom winning the first Nel the other three bouts. But they were always the best of pals.

Not only did they play their part in the success of the old Stadium, but they never turned down a worthy cause and gave

exhibitions at little halls all over Merseyside, making many friends for boxing.

They were two opposites in every respect: Dom short, wide shouldered, powerful, a great body puncher and a tough, rugged performer; Nel, tall, immaculate, a brilliant boxer, perhaps the best featherweight we have had since Driscoll.

They travelled to America together and did well, Volante's hustling, bustling style, particularly pleasing the Americans. His fight at the old St. Nick's Arena with Harry Carlton is still remembered.

Both Nel and Dom came up the hard way via the Stadium testing ground but it was only natural that Nel, who was rarely punished in the ring, lasted much longer than the aggressive Volante. The highlights of Nel's career, however, came after the closing of the old Stadium, and I will recall some of them later.

STADIUM'S LAST NIGHT

MR. BEST'S reign at the old Stadium ran from January 10, 1929, until March 5, 1931, during which time he staged 113 shows. When the site and building was purchased by a film company the time came for the Stadium to close its doors for the last time.

The last night was a sad one for spectators and officials alike. Thursday night at the Stadium had become almost a ritual in Liverpool. The same fans would occupy the same places every week and only sickness or some other serious cause could keep them away.

The main event that night featured Dom Volante and Teddy Brown and at the end of the show Mr. Best climbed into the ring to make one of his rare speeches. He promised the fans that he would do his utmost to build a new Stadium.

In the meantime he determined to keep the game alive on Merseyside. He ran shows at New Brighton, the Lyric Theatre in Liverpool and at Southport but none of them were a success financially.

Xmas Greetings
To All In The
Boxing Game

FROM

**JACK
TURNER**

(TIMEKEEPER)

Of PRESTON