

HISTORY OF THE PRUSSIAN QUEEN

AND LIVES OF THE PUBLICANS

1939 to 1950

William and Edith Sykes

William Wallis Syles was born in Sculcoates, Hull in 1898, where his father Frank was a railway shunter and freight guard. After attending Hull Westbourne School, the family moved to Doncaster where William worked as a railway clerk in the Mineral Department.

He joined the army in 1917, age 19, entering the Royal Flying Corps, and training at the School for Wireless Operators, in Aldershot. He served with the No. 59 Squadron based at Narborough Airfield in Norfolk. This became part of the newly formed Royal Air Force (RAF) from 1st April 1918. He later served with 12 Squadron, until 1920 when he returned to Doncaster and continued to work for the Great Northern section of the London and North-Eastern Railway.

In 1924 he married Edith Evelyn Wilton at St James' Church, Ravenfield, Yorkshire. The daughter of a Doncaster shopkeeper, she worked for Pearl Assurance Co. Ltd at Baxter Gate, Doncaster before the family moved to Ravenfield near Rotherham. Here William and Edith ran a poultry farm, and had daughters Evelyn Muriel in 1928 and Joyce in 1930.

In March 1939 the licence of the Prussian Queen Inn was transferred to William Sykes. Mr and Mrs Sykes lived there with their children who attended school and Sunday school in the village. William worked as the village inn keeper and a poultry farmer.

**AN APPLICATION to the Louth
County Licensing Justices on Wednes-
day for the full transfer of the licence
of the Prussian Queen, Saltfleetby All
Saints, to William W. Sykes, was granted.**

Louth Standard 11th March 1939

**30 White Leghorn 1938 Pullets for Sale,
3/4/- each, to make room; mostly
through moult; some laying. — Sykes,
Prussian Queen, Saltfleetby.**

Lincolnshire Standard and Boston Guardian 23rd September 1939

The family moved back to Yorkshire in early 1940. Their daughters married men from Cornwall and moved down to the South West.

William died in December 1963 in Yorkshire at the age of 65. Edith died in November 1988 in Kerris, Cornwall, aged 87.

Bert, Florence and Stan Marfleet

Bertie Marfleet was born in Sherwood, Nottingham in 1899, the youngest child of Edward (from North Hykeham) and Agnes (from Wragby). His father was a tram driver in Nottingham, then a carrier in Brinbrook, using horse-drawn carts.

At the start of the First World War, his older brother Henry enlisted in the 1st Battalion of the Coldstream Guards. He had been at the front for 15 weeks when he was killed in action, in May 1915, age 18. Bert enlisted with the Royal Berkshire Battalion in 1918 and later served with the Military Mounted Police as a Lance Corporal. He was sent to serve in France, Ireland and Italy, and was wounded on active service. He was awarded the Victory and British War medals.

From 1919 Bert was the first of the old carriers to operate a motorbus service from Binbrook, using a 14-seater Model T Ford. One passenger was said to have thought it so unsafe that they jumped out at the top of Limber Hill.

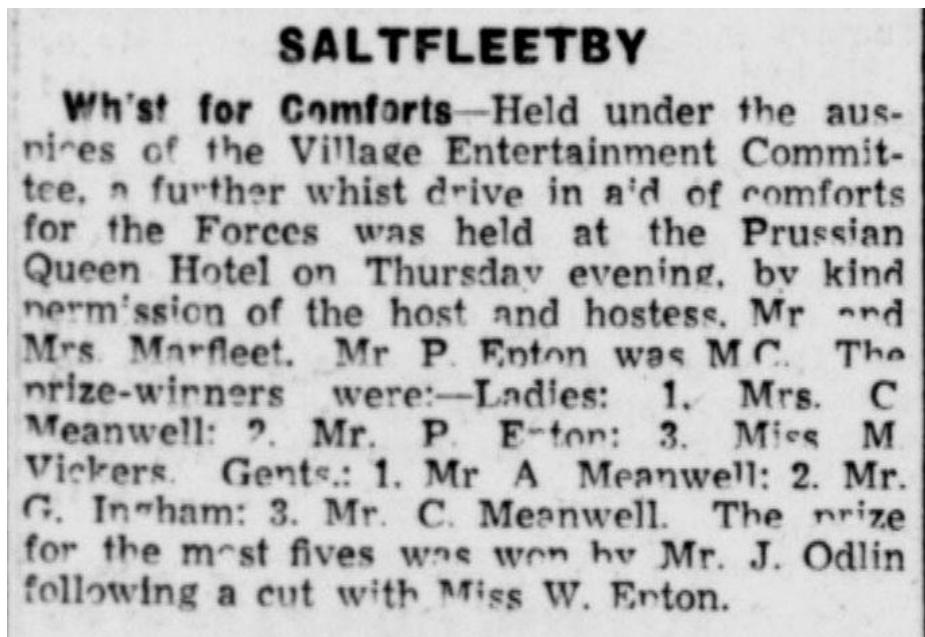
Florence Alice Hewson was born in 1899 in North Thoresby, her family moved to Binbrook where her father Anthony, worked as a shepherd.

Bertie and Florence married in 1921, and had a son, Charles Stanley, in September 1921. He continued to drive his motorbus in Binbrook, by 1922 having a 20-seater bus. In about 1927 they moved to Thurlby Rectory, Auburn, where they worked for Colin Campbell, the founder and first

president of the National Farmers Union. Bert worked as a gardener and chauffeur, Florence as housekeeper, and by 1939 Stanley as a tractor driver.

In early 1940 the family moved to Saltfleetby, where Bert became the new licence holder of the Prussian Queen. Stan began work as a lorry driver.

In March and April 1940, they held a number of whist drives at the pub to raise money for school children's sports, and comforts for the troops.



SALTFLEETBY

Whist for Comforts—Held under the auspices of the Village Entertainment Committee, a further whist drive in aid of comforts for the Forces was held at the Prussian Queen Hotel on Thursday evening, by kind permission of the host and hostess, Mr and Mrs. Marfleet. Mr P. Eton was M.C. The prize-winners were:—Ladies: 1. Mrs. C Meanwell: 2. Mr. P. Eton: 3. Miss M. Vickers. Gents.: 1. Mr A. Meanwell: 2. Mr. G. Ingham: 3. Mr. C. Meanwell. The prize for the most fives was won by Mr. J. Odlin following a cut with Miss W. Eton.

Louth and North Lincolnshire Advertiser 6th April 1940

Stan registered for military service in February 1941. In March 1941 he submitted an application as a conscientious objector, which was refused. After being medically examined, he was ordered to report on deferred service to an RAF depot in July 1941. He applied for postponement, but this was also rejected. He was legally enlisted into the Royal Air Force in July 1941, but he did not report for duty. In 1942 after failing to attend as ordered, the RAF got in touch with the police at Louth to report his absence. Sergeant Tuxworth of Louth Police investigated the case and saw Stan, warning him that he would have to report himself. 20-year-old Stan apparently left home to report. A

witness saw him on a bus the next day, believing him to be on his way to the depot, but when he didn't arrive, the RAF requested his arrest. The police visited the Prussian Queen several times to try to find him, but were unsuccessful.

His father, Bert declared that he hadn't seen him since he left. He later said that he unexpectedly found Stan in the pub kitchen on 7th August 1942, when he told him that he was going to report the next day. Bert gave him food and some money then continued serving at the bar. He said that when he returned to the kitchen, Stan was gone.

That night after 10pm, a police sergeant and four constables visited the Prussian Queen looking for Stan, asking to search the house. Bert allowed them to, telling them that they wouldn't find his son there, he didn't know where he was. After searching all the likely places, Pc Baumber went up a pair of steps where there was a trap door, but it was shut fast. Bert told them that it had been nailed up in winter to keep out snow and draughts. The officers went out on to a flat roof where there was a door which gave access to the false roof, but it was secured and nailed. Going back to try the trap door again they exerted pressure on it. Pc Baumber forced up the trap a little and said *"he's here sergeant, I can see him standing on the trap"*. Stan had finally been found hiding in a false room in the pub loft. After some persuasion he came down and was taken into custody.

Bert was reported for harbouring and concealing an absentee. He was charged at Louth County Police Court, for aiding his son to evade military service and helping to conceal him. Bert replied that his son had not joined the RAF, he was waiting for a tribunal in London, for which he had all the papers and a solicitor on the case.

The chairman, Colonel Edward Kyme Cordeaux, asked *"how do you think this country would get on in a time of crisis if all young men said they had no intention of going into the forces and would not go?"*. Bert said that his own experiences in the last war, when he was badly wounded and gassed, did not encourage him to advocate that his son should join up.

Col. Cordeaux replied *"Other people had that and others got their sons killed. It is your duty to your country, no matter what it costs you. It is the same for*

everybody. If you want this country to keep its place in the world and be free, you would, if you thought the matter over, have acted differently"

Col. Cordeaux declared that imprisonment was the only penalty for the offence, but in view of Bert's treatments for health problems, a report would be awaited from the medical authorities and the case would be adjourned.

After the court received the medical evidence, another hearing took place. Col. Cordeaux adjourned the case for a fortnight in order for Bert to get the medical treatment he needed. But Bert was seen at a bus stop, having left hospital because the doctor who was scheduled to operate on his ulcer was away ill. Superintendent Stevens ordered Bert to appear in court immediately.

After the hearing the story, the magistrates consulted in private. Col. Cordeaux then declared that the offence was *"an exceeding grave one and the only sentence they had power to impose was one of imprisonment"*. He was sentenced to six months in prison and ordered to pay £7 17s cost, or serve a further month's imprisonment in default.

**AIDED HIS SON TO
EVADE SERVICE
Saltfleetby Licensee Sent
To Prison**

**Grimsby Evening Telegraph 18th
September 1942**

**LICENSEE SENT
TO PRISON
LOUTH COUNTY BENCH AND
"GRAVE OFFENCE"**

**Skegness Standard 23rd September
1942**

The family then left the Prussian Queen and returned to live in Binbrook. Bert entered an appeal against the sentence. The now former licensee had his appeal heard in October 1942. Mrs Elizabeth Lane appeared to put the case for Mr Marfleet. She argued that, although it was the father's duty to tell the police when he saw his absentee son, many fathers in a similar position would have hesitated to hand over their only son to the police under such circumstances. Bert gave evidence saying that he honestly believed that the trap door was nailed-up, a workman had previously been into the false roof and he thought had left it refastened-up. Evidence was also heard from

the police and doctors. The Court reduced Mr Marfleet's sentence to six weeks' imprisonment from that day.

Stan served in the RAF for the rest of the war, some of the time stationed at RAF Binbrook, a Bomber Command station in the Lincolnshire Wolds, where he served as a driver. His name is on the Saltfleetby Second World War Roll of Honour that is displayed in St Peter's Church.

After the war Bert and Stan continued to run a bus and taxi service in Binbrook, as *Marfleet and Son*. Stan married Ivy Lillian Richardson, from Caistor, in 1954 in Louth. In 1960 Stan established *Marfleet Coaches* that provided private hire and a school bus services serving the Market Rasen, Caistor, Louth, Binbrook and Ravendale areas.

Florence died in 1959, age 60, in Binbrook. Bert died in 1961, age 62 at Louth County Hospital. They were buried at Binbrook St Mary & St Gabriel's Church.

Stan died suddenly whilst on holiday in Torquay, Devon, in August 1981, age 59. The Marfleet Coach company was sold off by the banks. His wife Ivy died in 1995, age 72.

The Home Guard

After the Marfleet family left the village, the vacant Prussian Queen was taken over as the headquarters of the Saltfleetby Home Guards. Originally formed in May 1940 as the Local Defence Volunteers, for men too young or old for the regular army, in our village many veterans of the First World War formed the core of the platoon. These included railway-crossing gate-keeper, Archie Ingamells who grew up at the Prussian Queen, and was the recipient of a Military Medal in 1916 "*for conspicuous service at the front*".

In charge of the Saltfleetby platoon was farmer, Jim Odlin of Poplar Farm. He joined the 5th Lincolnshire Regiment at the beginning of 1915 and served in the trenches in France becoming a sergeant. In November 1918, he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal "*For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty*". He was selected to represent his battalion at the Victory March in London in 1919.



**Jim Odlin, Grimsby Daily
Telegraph 14th March 1973**

Serving as Captain of the Saltfleetby Platoon, he was later made a Major, Second in Command of the Louth Battalion of the Home Guards.

Jim's younger brother Jack Odlin (born in Saltfleetby in 1913) joined the forces in March 1941, and died in Germany in 1945, age 32. He was buried in Kiel War Cemetery, his name appears on the Saltfleetby War Memorial outside St Peter's Church.

Defending brigades were sent into the village where they set up Forward Section Posts including constructing pillboxes to defend from invasion from the coast. These small concrete structures were fortified lookout stations consisting of three bays with fittings to mount an anti-aircraft gun in the centre, and machine guns on the interior windows. Many can still be seen in fields in the village, and along the coast.



A second world war pillbox on the Nature Reserve in Saltfleetby

The home guard manned lookout stations and roadblocks, including one directly opposite the pub on the Main Road. They trained rigorously, learning to throw hand grenades on the beach, and how to use the new "Projector, Infantry, Anti-Tank" (PIAT) rifles. They were sent on weekend camps to take part in manoeuvres against the regular army.

They also organised some fund-raising events in aid of the Red Cross, such as whist drives and auctions, that took place in the Prussian Queen.

In December 1944 local policeman Pc Wastell, was patrolling at night when he discovered that the Home Guard headquarters at the Prussian Queen had been broken into, the lock forced and a number of articles taken. A missing clock was later recovered from Mablethorpe, and a Scottish soldier arrested for the theft. At Louth magistrates Court he pleaded guilty to taking the clock, but denied taking the other items including a hammer and some field

dressings, claiming that he found the door open. He was charged with larceny and fined £3.

After the Home Guards were disbanded, the Prussian Queen again became a pub with a new landlord taking over in 1945.

Frank and Mary Yexley

Frank Maurice James Yexley was born in Fulham in 1911, ninth of eleven children of Jessie and Charles, a labourer from Whitechapel. He grew up with his large family in a 4-room house in Fulham. He loved boxing, and became a schoolboy champion in the 1920s, fighting professionally from the age of 13.

He married Grace Elizabeth Marion Shrimpton from Fulham in December 1932. They had two daughters and moved to Twickenham. Here Frank was secretary of the boxing section of his local sports club, helping to organise a concert for the club's supper evening in December 1938.

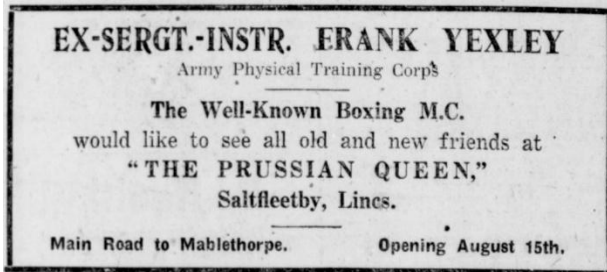
He enlisted in the army at Ealing in May 1939, initially as a Bandsman in the Royal Engineers, then the Army Physical Training Corps where he rose to the rank of Sergeant Instructor. Whilst at the Army School of Physical Training in Aldershot he served alongside numerous famous sportsmen such as Matt Busby and Joe Mercer. Coming to Nottingham in 1940 he ran boxing courses at Norton Street Boys' Club. Here he met his second wife, Mary and her young son Dennis.

Mary Elizabeth Wright was born in 1903 in Nottingham, the second child of Martha (nee Pitt) and William Wright, a coal miner at Clifton Colliery. In 1921 she was living with her family in Queens Walk, age 17 working as an embroidery sewing machinist. In 1924 she married William Ramsbottom from Bridlington, then working as a butcher in Nottingham. They had a son, Dennis, in 1927. They later separated, and she married Frank Yexley. They lived together on Radford Road. Frank became step-father to Dennis, who later emigrated to Australia with his wife Gladys and their family.

During the war, Company Sergt. Instructor Frank Yexley toured the country with Captain Jack Peterson, former British and Empire heavyweight champion, to raise money for the Army Welfare, RAF Benevolent funds and other causes. He acted as MC at numerous boxing matches where he

introduced the contenders and guests. He said that one time he stepped into the ring to introduce Winston Churchill. Frank gave talks on sport to the Army and RAF, and along with Jack Peterson occasionally featured on BBC Services' Radio talking about boxing.

Leaving the army in 1945, Frank and Mary took over the Prussian Queen, which they reopened as a pub again on 15th August 1945 declaring it *"The Brightest Spot in Lincolnshire"*.



**Louth and North Lincolnshire Advertiser 11th
August 1945**



**Frank Yexley in The Louth
Standard 2nd April 1949**

A referee with the British Boxing Board of Control, he offered his services as a physical instructor free to all youth movements in the area, and sports coach teaching boxing, physical culture and ju-jitsu etc, using the slogan: *"Fighting Fit, Fit to Fight"*.



Louth Standard 19th October 1946

On 31st October 1945, the Mayor and Mayoress of Louth were invited to the Prussian Queen for the first of a series of charity darts and dominoes matches. Donated goods were sold during the evening. The event raised £17 for the British Sailors Society. Jim Odlin was captain of the home darts team, who beat the visiting "Skylarks" team from the Woolpack at Louth. But the home dominoes team, captained by Mr T. Jaques, lost to the visiting team.

Mr and Mrs Yexley organised darts matches and other social functions at the end of 1945, managing to raise £35 for a Christmas party for the children in Branston Sanatorium. When handing over the cheque Frank promised to raise funds to give the children in the institution a day at the seaside. Further fundraising events in 1946 achieved this, when in January the Prussian Queen hosted an evening of darts and dominoes matches against the Louth Fur and Feather Club. In February visitors to the pub "*enjoyed a capital musical evening*". Donated gifts were sold raising the sum of £32 11s 6d for the children's seaside trip.

When teams of darts and dominoes players from the Wheat Sheaf, Louth, were entertained at the pub in January 1946, £12 was raised for the St Margaret's Children's Home (that used to be on Victoria Road in Louth, now the Beaumont Hotel).

In May 1946 a charity darts match was held between two local families: the Dales of Louth vs the Applebys of Saltfleetby. The Trelawney Band, from Mablethorpe's Café Regent and Trelawney Ballroom (which used to be where Spanish City is now) played music for the evening. Donated items were sold, Mrs Yexley gave a bottle of sherry, Frank gave a function tray. The event raised £50 5s, which the Louth Standard thought "must be a record for any village inn in this district." Of the proceeds £25 2s 6d was sent to the Mayor of Louth's St. Dunstan's Fund (for blind veterans) and £25 2s 6d to the Lindsey Blind Society.

The pub's two darts teams played in the Louth and District Open Division, and also fundraised with Frank to put on special events for local children. These included treating 50 children from St Anthony's Orphanage in Grimsby to a day out to Mablethorpe in August 1947, ending in a party at the Trelawney Ballroom. Frank gave each child a toy, stick of rock, four 3d pieces and a bag of fruit to take back. A Christmas party in 1949 was held at the Trelawney for over 50 Saltfleetby children and their mothers.

Frank also promoted numerous boxing contests at Louth Town Hall, every month from 1946. He was organiser and MC for many "All Star Programmes", including such well-known names as British Heavyweight Champion Bruce Woodcock. Tickets could be bought from the Prussian Queen, and special

buses were laid on for these events, which raised money for local charities such as the Mayor's Hospital Fund and Louth Youth Club. From 1947, he organised a number of Wrestling contests at Louth Town Hall, featuring star names such as the British Heavyweight Champion Bert Assirati.

Frank also organised numerous special events at the Town Hall such as a party for the 83rd Field Bakery Company, stationed at the barracks in Kenwich Road, the Louth Young Conservatives' Ball in 1946, Louth Nats Football Club ball in 1947, and the Licenced Victuallers' Ball in 1948.

When applying for a "Miss Personality" Dance in December 1946, Inspector Ford of Louth Police commented that they were not impressed by the title. During his explanation of the event Frank said that it was an endeavour to try and make the dark winter nights a bit happier. The licence was granted.



**England Footballer,
Tommy Lawton
(1919-1996)**

England centre forward, Tommy Lawton visited his old army friend Frank at the Prussian Queen for a few days in February 1948. Whilst playing for Everton and England in 1940 he had been recruited to the Army Physical Training Corps, where they served together. He became Britain's most expensive player when he was sold from Chelsea to Notts County for £20,000 in 1947. Whilst in our area he chatted to Mablethorpe United players, where Frank was an official. Frank was also chairman of *The Marshes United Sports Club* that played at the New Inn field in Saltfleet.

The Mablethorpe Carnival had been a popular event in the pre-war years. In July 1948 the Mablethorpe and Sutton Council appointed Frank as organiser to revive the event, that ran for a week in September. He was chosen as they believed he had considerable experience, was an excellent organiser, raiser of money and "could get things done". He earned the nickname "Ideas Frank" for his efforts in creating a varied and successful event.

British Rail arranged daily excursions at single fare rates from Nottingham, Grimsby, Boston, Lincoln, Louth and other places. The week was packed with activities that drew large crowds for which Frank made announcements

through loud speakers. Multiple venues around the towns were used, such as the Dunes Theatre (which was then an Open-Air stage), which hosted the opening ceremony, talent competitions, a variety show, concert, a men's knee competition, and daily heats of the "Ideal Holiday Girl" contest. The overall winner was 19-year-old Elaine Walne of Leicester who was staying for two weeks at Trusthorpe Holiday Camp with her parents and younger sister.

The Imperial Hotel in Sutton-on-Sea hosted the opening carnival ball and an art exhibition. Whist drives, olde time dance, fancy dress, baby show, and a mannequin parade were some of the events held in the Trelawney Ballroom. Another baby show was held at The Bacchus Hotel. An evening sing-song took place at Johnny's Bar (where Heron Foods is now). The Grange and Links Hotel in Sandilands hosted a carnival ball. A dog show took place in a marquee behind the Café Regent with awards for such categories as ugliest dog, most soulful eyes, most dignified and daintiest dog. Sports and donkey derbies were held on the beach. There were competitions for the best decorated boarding house and best dressed shop window, and a daily hunt for the mystery "Mr Carnival". Billy Butlin (who then ran the fun-fair in Mablethorpe) donated the fireworks for a display on the foreshore.

The highlight of the week was a big parade on the Saturday afternoon in which many local organisations and businesses took part, with music played by Grimsby Sea Cadets drum and bugle band, Louth British Legion and Brigg Town Band. The town councillors and the Ideal Holiday Girl rode in decorated landau carriages. Frank commentated with a microphone from a platform on a lorry behind them, followed by children in fancy dress, horse-drawn decorated vehicles, decorated cycles, motor vehicles and tableaux. Prizes for the best were awarded. The festivities concluded with a "Crazy Night" in the Trelawney where Frank received a "tremendous ovation". On Sunday the Dunes hosted a church service with community hymn singing, led by Louth British Legion Band. Frank read the lesson.

Hailed as a great success, the carnival made a profit of £209, of which Frank was awarded an honorarium of £30.

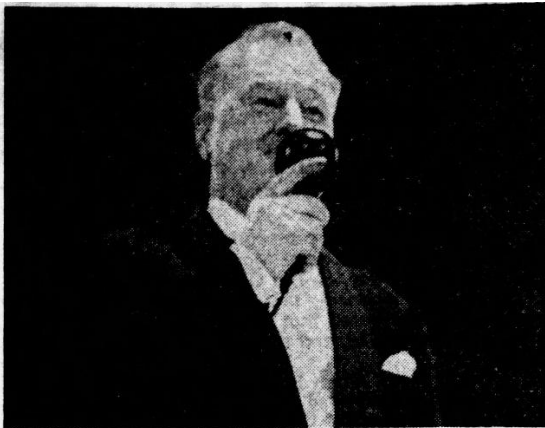
The following year Frank was appointed as entertainments organiser to the Derbyshire Miners' Welfare Holiday Centre at Winthorpe near Skegness.

Here “Uncle Frank”, described as a “real live wire”, took physical training classes on the beach in the mornings, as well as arranging boxing tournaments, dances and a variety of fun holiday activities. Frank and Mary moved back to Nottingham in 1950.

Mary Yexely’s parents William and Martha Wright had moved from Nottingham to Mablethorpe in the 1930s to run a guest house. They lived at the Prussian Queen for 5 years with them. In 1950 they moved to Station Villas, Theddlethorpe, here they celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary in 1960.



William (1882-1964), and Martha Wright (1882-1961), who lived at the Prussian Queen with their daughter and son-in-law



FRANK YEXLEY as the public see him announcing the contestants for a fight at one of the many tournaments at which he has been Master of Ceremonies in the Midlands.

Nottingham Evening Post 19th May 1971

In Nottingham Frank made a name for himself as a boxing MC, introducing competitors at venues throughout the Midlands. Many matches were televised, so Frank became well-known as the “Voice of Boxing”. He worked with promoters such as Reg King, and introduced many famous boxers including Henry Cooper and Cassius Clay. He frequently stepped in to keep order and deal with unruly behaviour.

He promoted weekly international free-style wrestling at Skegness Festival Centre throughout the summer of 1958.

He also worked as a steward at the miner’s welfare institute at Newstead Colliery, a market stallholder, a supermarket manager and a sales rep. In 1968

he joined the pools office staff at Notts County FC, working on their fund-raising activities. As public relations officer of the Supporters Association, he conducted community singing with the Commodore Show Band, at their gala day in May 1971. He made his final appearance as a boxing MC in June 1971.

In November 1971 *The People* newspaper investigated allegations that the pools and other games at Notts County were rigged, and printed an exposé that made national headlines. Frank tendered his resignation immediately when it came to light.

His predecessor in the job, had masterminded the crooked competition and instructed Frank in how to run the fraudulent games. Frank would have to memorise the “winning ticket numbers” before going to public prize draws in local clubs and pubs. There, irrespective of the number drawn, he would call out the numbers memorised – the tickets for which were in his pocket. Nobody else at these draws ever saw the actual numbers. Supporters then bought sealed tickets for 1s, hoping they contained the pre-drawn winning numbers entitling them to prizes worth up to £100. Fictitious winners would be made-up for the big prizes, while the actual tickets, that Frank hid in his pocket, were destroyed or given to people in on the scam. Bingo and other games were rigged in similar ways, numbers removed so no one could get a full house. When taking over as the main fund-raising organiser, Frank at first continued rigging the games in the same way. Unlike his predecessor though, he put all funds back into the club and kept none for himself.

Frank made a full confession to the newspapers and said he was ashamed of his part in it. He appeared in court in April 1973 and pleaded guilty to conspiring to cheat and defraud, falsifying a ledger and six other charges. The prosecuting council said “There is no suggestion that he feathered his own nest, the money went into the club funds”. He was given a 12-month conditional discharge.

Frank continued to live with Mary at Trentside, Beeston Rylands. He died suddenly in September 1974, age 63.

Mary Yexley died in Nottingham in 1995, age 91.