



Freddie Mills who suffered the effects of his match-makers bravery

Freddie my friend

The subtitle ("The final, complete biography of Freddie Mills") is inaccurate - the book is far from complete and I doubt if it's the final biography! It is, however, infinitely better than the sneering, error-filled, downright nasty book by Tony van den Bergh.

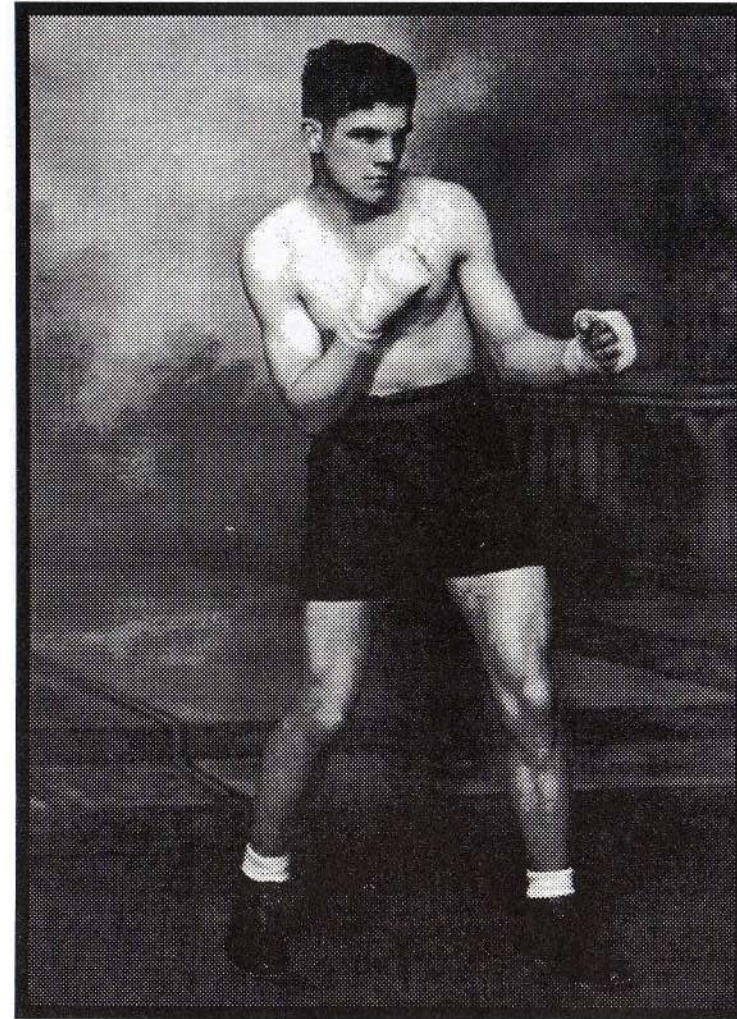
Peter McInnes, like Mills' 1978 biographer Bill Bavin, is an old friend of his subject's - from childhood, in fact. He tells us of Mills' childhood and early days as boxer - never an amateur - and booth fighter, his RAF and professional careers, and his post-boxing career in various branches of the entertainment business, ending in his tragic death. He was essentially the Henry Cooper of his day - a public idol who stayed on after he'd retired and a gallant loser more remembered for fights he lost than for those he won; of his post-war fights against top-class opponents - Lesnevich, Woodcock, Baksi, Maxim - he won only one of them. To be fair, he wasn't fully fit against Lesnevich

the first time and certainly neither he nor Bruce Woodcock had any business fighting each other only three weeks after losing punishing fights against Gus Lesnevich and Tami Mauriello respectively. Mills, indeed, was never again the same fighter afterwards - unfortunately, there was no credible opposition for him in his own division in Britain. And, one might add, he lost only to top fighters in the post-war years: world champions Lesnevich and Joey Maxim, top heavyweight contenders Bruce Woodcock and Joe Baksi, and Lloyd Marshall, one of those fighters who was too good for his own good!

Mr. McInnes is certain that Mills was murdered and makes a plausible case for this, based partly on his experience; as someone who's now read all four of Mills' biographies, I believe it to be more likely than not, but wouldn't be prepared to swear to it. I do, however, fully agree with Mr. McInnes on both the state of

boxing today and the sickening way Mills was treated in 1946 (see previous paragraph); the villains in this case being his manager Ted Broadribb, promoter Jack Solomons, and the so-called British Boxing Board of Control.

This book is best read in conjunction with the other Mills bio-graphies - especially Jack Birtley's, written in 1977. It's enjoyable and well-written but too short; it didn't tell me much I didn't know, apart from one or two amusing episodes dealing with Mills' short-lived career working in a garage as a teenager and his RAF career - and the revelation that his autopsy showed no signs of brain damage! If the book runs to a second edition, I would suggest more information on Mills' show business career (he made at least four films), an index, and an appendix giving the words of Mills' version of "There's No Business Like Show Business" - which, as a service to readers, I reproduce here:



If I've got anything wrong - my source is "The Fight Game", by James and Frank Butler, published in 1954.

"Freddie my Friend - Peter McInnes" (Caestus Books, 1995 ISBN 952530104)

MARK TAHA

THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE THE FIGHT BUSINESS

There's no business like the fight business

They smile when they're hit low

All the managers are such great schemers

Twenty-five per cent is all they know

Managers go on for blinking ever

But where, oh where, do fighters go?

There's no racket like their racket

Cigars are all the vogue

After each match they count their whack

Into their cars to count their jack

While the poor old fighter makes one more comeback

On his bike he peddles for home

What a game this fight game has grown!