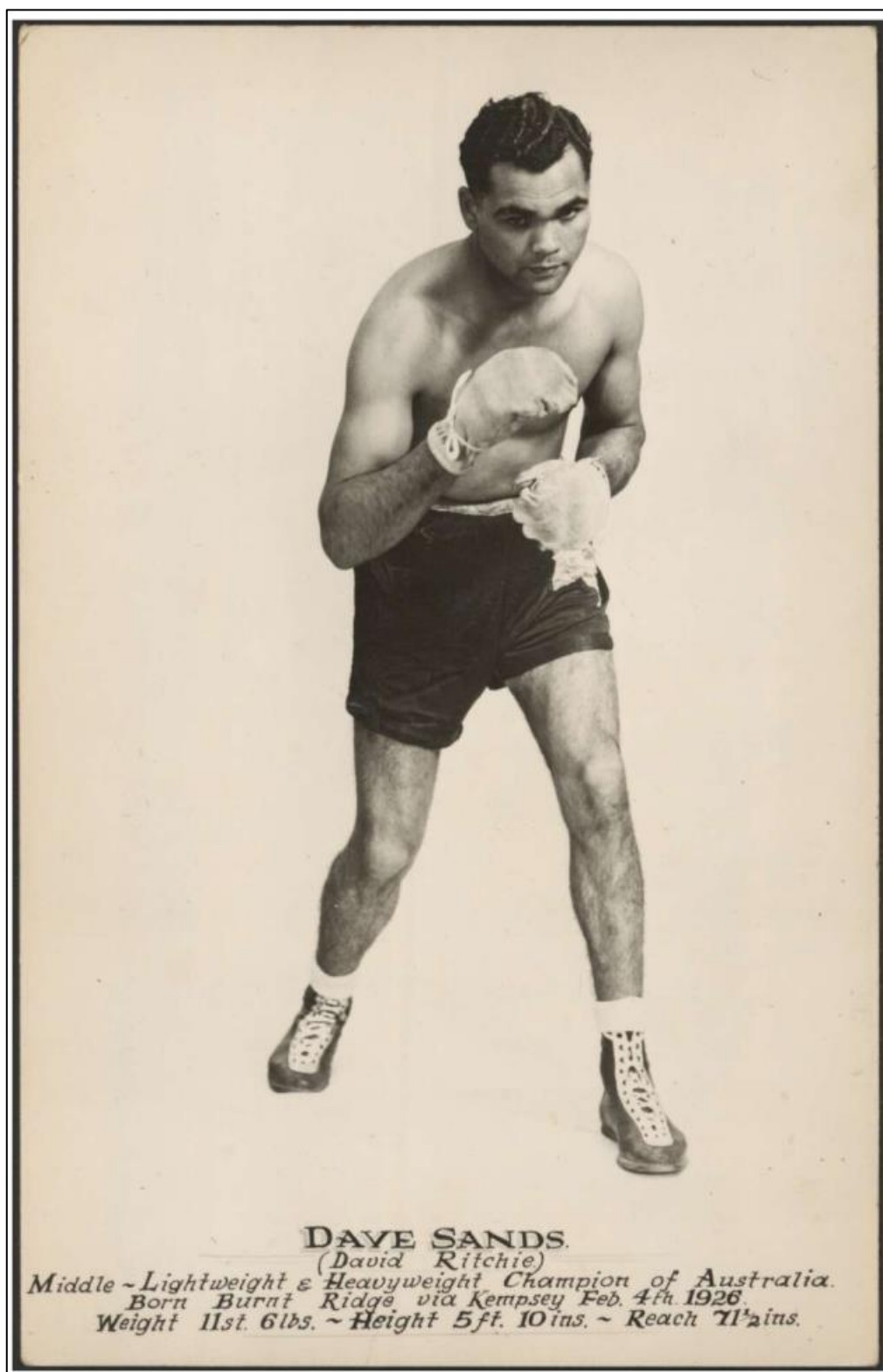# Dave Sands Last Fight – Wagga Wagga

9th July 1952 – Kyeamba Smith Hall

DAVE SANDS.
(David Ritchie)
Middle ~ Lightweight & Heavyweight Champion of Australia.
Born Burnt Ridge via Kempsey Feb. 4th 1926.
Weight 11st. 6lbs. ~ Height 5ft. 10ins. ~ Reach 71½ins.

Photo courtesy National Library of Australia.

Dave Sands Final Fight

In 1952 Arthur French was a prominent fight promoter in Wagga Wagga.[1] In May of that year French organised a program to come off on the 16th May [a Friday night], in the Riverina Stadium.[2] A prominent attraction was Tommy Burns, the ex-welter weight champion, who was on a state wide tour. Burns fought an exhibition spar with Bernie Hall, but Burns, who had been confined to bed for the previous week with influenza, was said to be "*puffing heavily after three rounds.*"

The program included a six round bout between Englishman, Johnny Kelly, and Dave Leighton, was described as, "*a tame affair.*"

The main bout was between Wagga Wagga light-weight champion, Dickie Lowe, and Arthur Kelly, which Kelly won. A description of the ten round bout read as follows,[3]

> "Lowe scored with his heavy overhand right to the jaw in the first three rounds, but Kelly in the final seven rounds tied up Lowe in close and gradually wore him down. The fight was highlighted by flurries of punches and although Lowe fought gamely he could not effectively penetrate the Englishman's solid defence after the early rounds."

The most entertaining match was said to be a four rounder between "Kanga" Evans [RAAF] and Johnny Charlton, a local Wagga boy. Both boys fought non-stop, with Evans winning the first round, but after that it was Charlton who dominated with a solid straight left.

Dave Sands was also on the card, but he arrived late at the hall, as a consequence of the Wagga Wagga airport being closed due to bad weather. Sands was compelled to travel by car instead.

Sands fought three one and a half minute exhibition rounds with his brother George, but because of his late arrival he promised to come back to Wagga Wagga next month for a real fight, if an opponent could be found.

French was quick to lock in Fijian heavyweight, Henry Bray, to fight Dave Sands, for the Australian Heavy-Weight title, at Wagga Wagga, on the 17th June [1952]. Bray landed in Melbourne around the 25th May, and went straight into training.[4] This fight was to consist of fifteen three minute rounds. Sands was defending his title and this was said to be possibly the first ever national title fought at Wagga Wagga.

In late June French was forced to find another opponent for Sands. The fight had been set back to the 9th July and Bray had to leave Australia before that date. French was able to secure Jim Woods, an upcoming heavyweight who had previously defeated Bray several months back [at Newcastle].[5]

The championship fight took place on the 9th July 1952, when Sands knocked out Woods in the fourth round. The triple Australian Champion was always in control, and simply outclassed his opponent. It was short right hand to Wood's jaw that finished the fight.[6] This fight was staged in the Kyeamba Smith Hall. Immediately following Sands win over Woods, a syndicate of Wagga Wagga sportsmen offered £2,000 for an American boxer, Freddie Dawson, to fight Sands at Wagga Wagga.

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[1] Daily Advertiser. 22nd February 1952, p6.
[2] Daily Advertiser. 17th May 1952, p8.
[3] Daily Advertiser. 17th May 1952, p8.
[4] Daily Advertiser. 31st May 1952, p10.
[5] Daily Advertiser. 27th June 1952, p6.
[6] Daily Advertiser.10th July 1952, p6.

Above: Kyeamba Smith Hall the venue for Dave Sands title defence in 1952. Courtesy NSW State Records [NRS549: 14/1745. LG Watt].

Above: The six Sands brothers [L to R] Clem, Ritchie, George, Dave, Alf, and Russell. Courtesy National Library of Australia. [PIC/8395/513]

Arthur French was planning to hold the fight, "*in the open air, probably at the cricket ground,*" if a match could be organised.[7]

BOXING

RIVERINA STADIUM, KYEAMBA SMITH HALL, WAGG

WEDNESDAY, JULY 9, 1952

AT 8 p.m

HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP OF AUSTRALIA
OVER 15 THREE MINUTE ROUNDS

Jimmy WOODS v Dave SAND

(SYDNEY)

Woods is rated third best Heavyweight in Australia. At Newcastle on February 16 outpointed Henry Bray, the Fijian, over 12 rounds: Newcastle, March 1, he K.O.d Ubaldo Giometti, 8 rounds: Newcastle. March 22, K.O.d Jim Sead, 12 rounds. He has also defeated on two occasions, Jack Dempsey, the heavyweight champion of N.S.W.

(NEWCASTLE

Empire Middleweight Cham pion and Middlewei Light Heavyweight Cha pion of Australia, and ra third best Middleweight the world

10 TWO MINUTE ROUNDS SUPPORTING BOUT

Toby RUSSELL v Harold PIPER

(SYDNEY

Who holds a decision over Alan Landers, who is rated third best Flyweight in Australia.

(Bantam Weight Champi of Riverina

THE USUAL GOOD PRELIMINARIES
BOOK EARLY TO SAVE DISAPPOINTMENT. RING 9

A FRENCH, Promoter.

Left: An advertisement for the Sands-Woods championship fight in July 1952.[8]

JIM WOODS

Left: Jim Woods.[9]

At the time of his [Sands] July fight he was the Empire middleweight champion, and the Australian lightweight, middleweight and heavyweight champion.
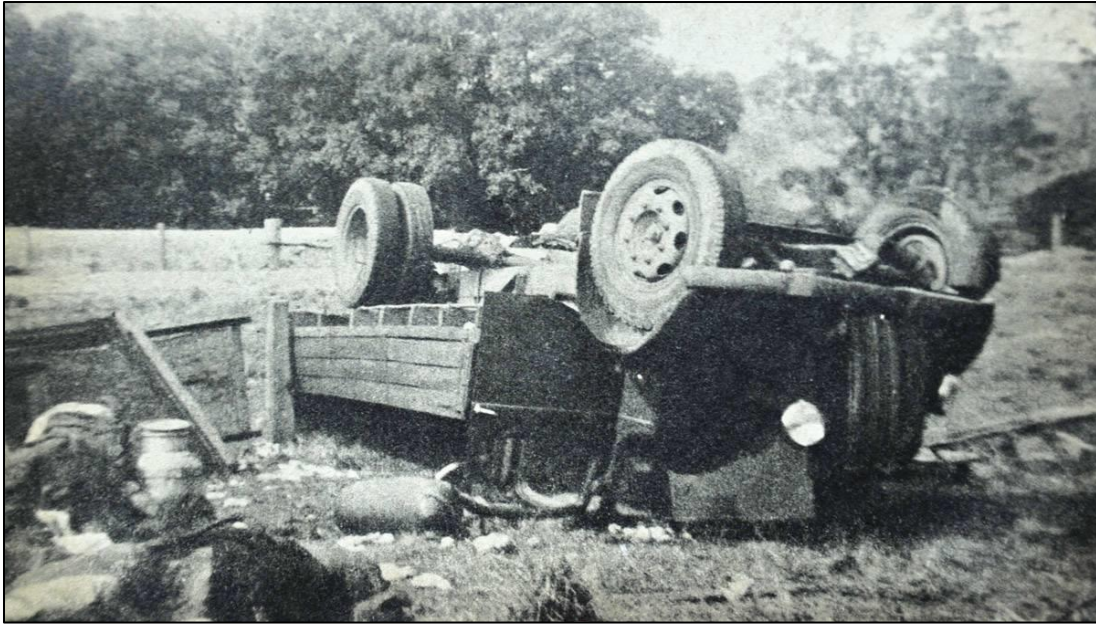
Before another fight could be arranged Dave Sands died as a consequence of a tragic accident at Dungong. On Monday the 11th August 1952, Dave Sands was driving a five ton truck when it crashed over a small embankment some four miles north of Dungog, on the Wangat Road, near Myall Creek. There were fifteen people in the truck including Sands' brother, Alfie, and his [Dave's] infant daughter, Lilian. Dave Sands suffered head and internal injuries, which resulted in his death later that evening.[10]

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[7] Daily Advertiser. 10th July 1952, p1.
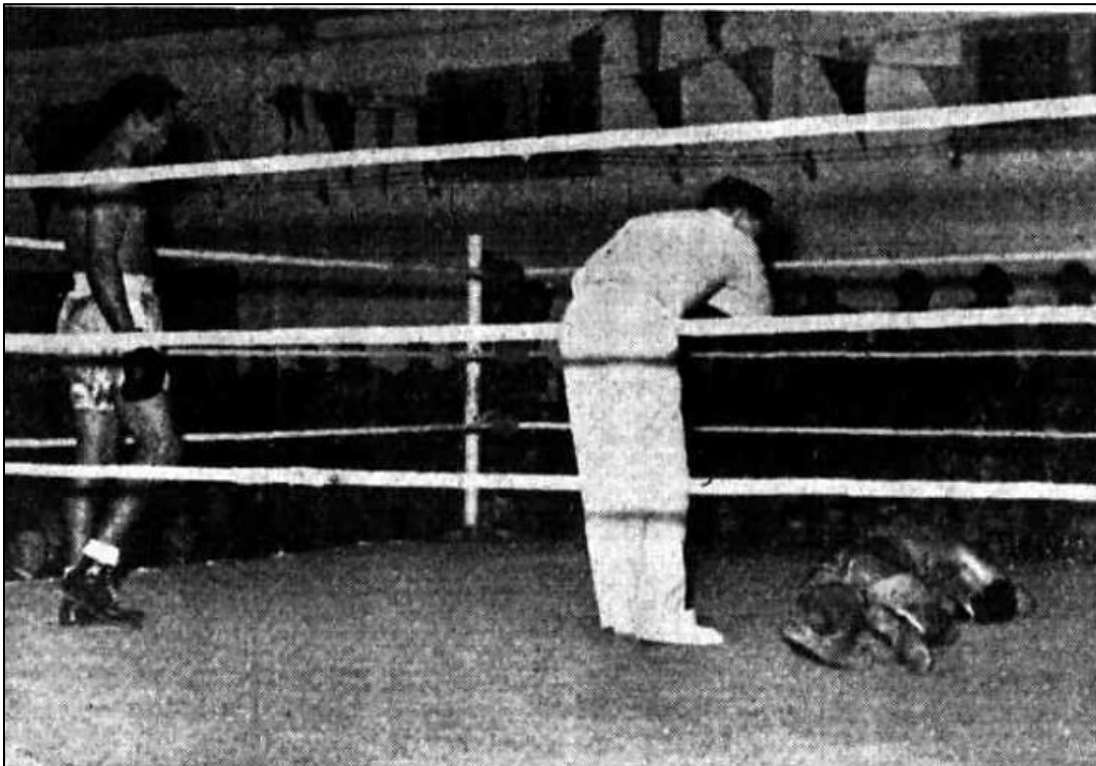[8] Daily Advertiser. 2nd July 1952, p8.
[9] Daily Advertiser. 5th July 1952, p8.
[10] Sydney Morning Herald. 12th August 1952, p1.

Above: Dave Sands died on his wedding anniversary. His wife, Bessie, was not one of the people in the truck.

This tragedy meant that the last fight Dave Sands ever fought was the bout at Wagga Wagga on the 9th July 1952, when he successfully defended his Australian heavyweight championship.

Above: Jim Woods down for the count with Sands watching on, in what was to be his last fight ever. The referee was Steve Norrish of Wagga Wagga.[11]

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[11] Daily Advertiser. 19th August 1952, p8.

David Ritchie

The following review of Sands' life appeared in the Sydney press,[12]

> "Dave Sands, Australian and British Empire middleweight boxing champion, who died last night after a motor accident, was one of five boxing brothers.
> Sands was born on February 4, 1926, the son of an aboriginal mother and a Puerto Rican father, George Ritchie.
> The Ritchies had five sons, and all of them were boxers. George Ritchie, their father, was a fighter himself. In his day he was champion of the Northern Rivers.
> Dave was born at Euroka Creek, near Burnt Bridge, in the West Kempsey district.
> In 1942, when Dave was 16, his elder brother Clem took him to Newcastle to meet Mr. Tom Maguire, who was already training Clem as a boxer.
> **Three Titles in a Year**
> Three years later Dave had "arrived" as a first-class boxer. At Newcastle on October 20, 1945, he won the middleweight championship of N.S.W. by knocking out Max Cameron in the eleventh round.
> On May 11, 1946, he became middleweight champion of Australia when he beat Jack Kirkham, of Victoria, by a knock-out in the twelfth round.
> Then, in four rounds, he knocked out Jack Johnson, of Victoria, to win the Australian light-heavyweight title.
> On August 24, 1946, he won his third title by winning the Australian heavyweight championship from Alf Gallagher, of Sydney, when he knocked him out in the third round.
> Sands had won his three titles in just on 12 months and had fought-only 19 rounds in the ring to win them.
> In 1947, Stadiums Ltd. imported three American boxers. Sands beat them all.
> Then he toured New Zealand, winning three fights there in a month.
> In 1949 he went to England and, under the promotion of Jack Solomons, was beaten in the tenth round by American Tommy Yarosz on points.
> Fifteen days later, on April 14, he unimpressively defeated Frenchman Lucien Caboche.
> After this fight, Sands went to Newcastle, England. He had always trained in Newcastle, Australia, and Maguire thought the similarity in names, at least, might make some difference to him. It did. He won two fights in Newcastle, and then beat Robert Villemain in London.
> On September 6, 1949, he met Dick 'Turpin for the Empire middleweight title. Dave knocked Turpin out in one minute of the first round.
> In 1950 he fought in Singapore, and in 1951 Sands again went to London, seeking a title fight for the world middleweight title.
> Because of his late arrival in the country - he refused to go until the warm weather-he was never matched for the title.
> Instead, he beat Mel Brown in London and Duggie Miller in Birmingham.
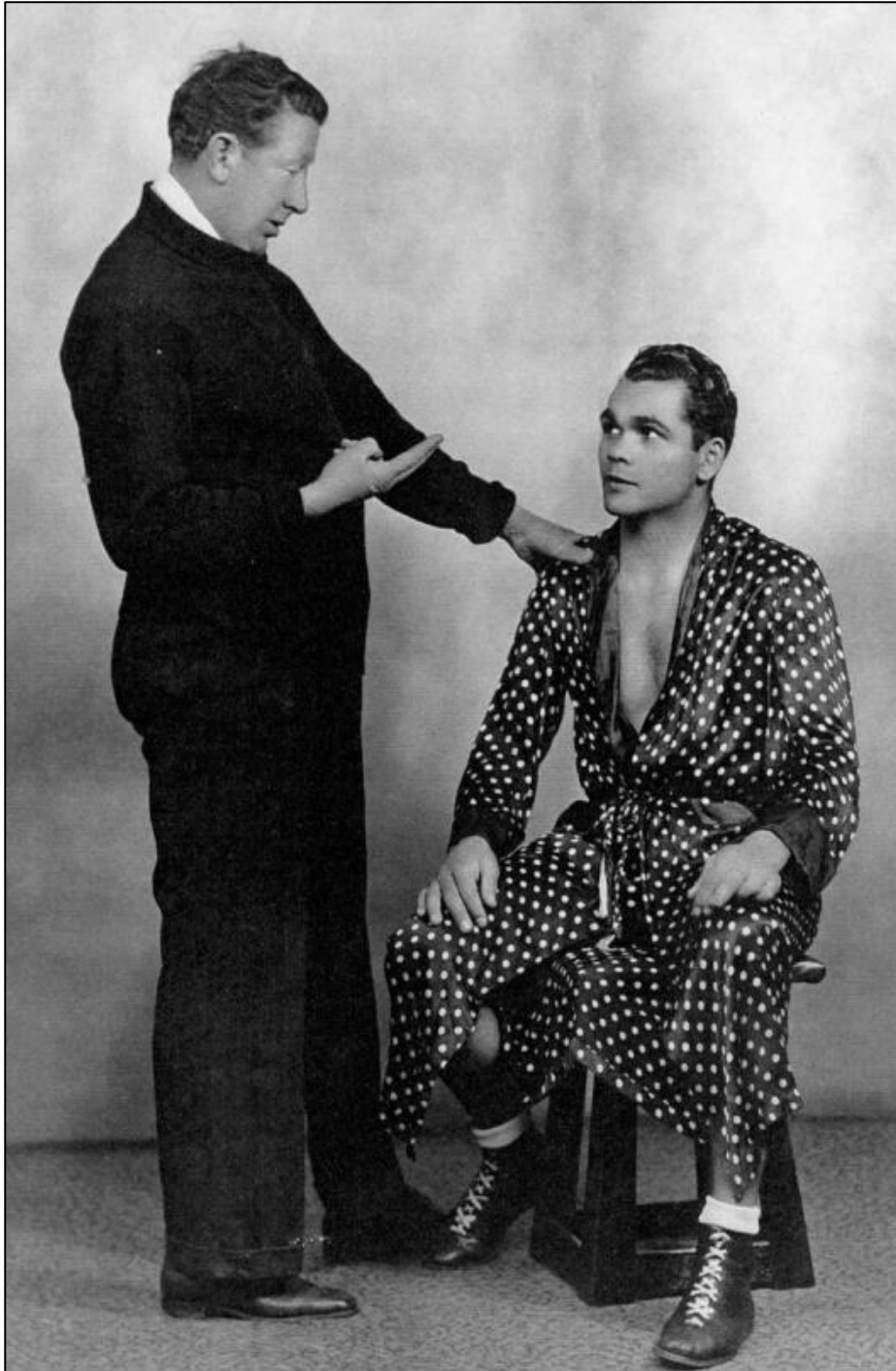> **Goes To U.S.**
> After that he went to the United States, where he beat Carl Olson in Chicago and Henry Brimm in Buffalo.
> Returning to London, he was knocked out in the seventh round of an overweight bout by Trinidad native Yolando Pompey. Dave then returned home.

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[12] Sydney Morning Herald. 12th August 1952, p2.

On arrival in Australia, Sands and Maguire split up. After Equity Court
proceedings, Maguire was awarded 7½ per cent, of his purses if Sands fought
abroad, and 5 per cent, of his Australian winnings.
Sands, after his return, boxed at showgrounds in boxing booth displays.
Last week he turned down offers to fight in America, and had contracted to fight
New Zealander Don Mullett on August 21.
Sands is survived by a wife and three children."

Above: Dave Sands with his trainer and manager, Tom Maguire. Courtesy National Library of
Australia.