

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

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JOHN LOWE M.B.E.

Many, many congratulations to my good friend, three-time World Darts Champion John Lowe on being awarded an M.B.E. (Member of the British Empire) in the Queen's New Year's Honours list.



As you probably know I worked with John on his autobiography *Old Stoneface* published in 2005 and later with him on *The Art of Darts* (2009). For me this award to John has been a long time coming and, given his contribution to the sport of darts (and his tireless work for charity) over more than four decades, is richly deserved. When I e-mailed John to congratulate him on this prestigious award he replied

What a fantastic way to start the New Year; to be made a Member of the British Empire by Her Majesty The Queen.

I am simply delighted, delighted for my family, friends and my supporters, for Unicorn, who I am very proud to say, have been with me on my Darting journey for over 40 years. A special 'Thank you' to Mike Watterson and the people who nominated me, and gave gracious testimonies on my behalf.

The award has been given for Services to Darts and Charity. I have received many accolades in the Sport of Darts but to be recognised for services to the sport makes me very proud. I am equally proud of my commitment to charity work and give a massive 'Thank you' to all the people who have helped us together to raise the much-needed funds.

This is time for celebration but I have a tinge of sadness when I give thought to my darting rival, partner on so many occasions, and friend, Eric Bristow M.B.E. who sadly passed away this year. I know Eric would have been the first to congratulate me and I am sure we would have had the party of all parties.

From Alexandra Palace and the News of the World trophy, to Buckingham Palace to receive the M.B.E.: a very rewarding and wonderful journey and one that is far from over.

Once again, CONGRATULATIONS JOHN and long may you continue to bring pleasure to darts fans everywhere and to raise even more money for great causes.

(Image of John taken in 2005 when he was celebrating 30 years as a professional darts player
© Tip Top Pics Ltd. Used with permission.)

THE AUSTRALIAN LEAGUE OF DARTS LEGENDS

Back in November I received an e-mail from Australia from George Foster. George is best known for winning the Unicorn World Pairs Championship with his good friend Kevin White back in 1976. George (pictured right and on the left at the time of their victory) wrote:

Hi Patrick, Thank you for the continued and great work that you do compiling your monthly DDN Darts Magazine. It is full of so many interesting stories and always a great read.

Which brings me to another reason for making contact. My wife Vicki and I had the pleasure of being invited to attend a darts presentation recently for the Australian Darts Legends Championships which had been held in New South Wales. We were invited guests at the presentation dinner of the NSW Legends President: Mr Bob Weaver and among conversations during our dinner the subject of your monthly DDN magazine came up.

Bob is very aware of you and what a great darts historian you are. He is currently not on your mailing list and is very keen to be included if at all possible, which has prompted me to send you this email.



Thank you once again for your valued input into the wonderful game of darts.

Following George's e-mail, the next thing I did was to add Bob to the subscribers' list and write to him to ask about the league of Australian darts legends. In early December I received a reply from Bob Weaver with information about Australian Darts Legends Inc. Bob told me

The Legends Association is for darts players over 45 years of age and was formed in 1997 when the World Cup was held in Western Australia. The idea was the brainchild of Don Reynolds from Western Australia and Patrick Fletcher from New South Wales.

They set about forming Legends that year by getting together dart players from each state and they first played after the Australian Championships in Perth. From then on, Western Australia, Victoria and New South Wales kept the idea going.

In 1998 the Legends Australian Championships were played in South Australia at Morphettville in the evening after the DFA (Darts Federation of Australia) competition had concluded for the day. From 1999 the Legends went out on their own conducting their National Championships in Victoria at the Geelong Darts Club.

(The photograph above shows just one of the darts rooms in action at Gosford in 2018. Image
© Australian Darts Legends Inc. Used with permission.)



The Central Coast Leagues Club in Gosford (NSW) was the venue in 2000, Perth (Western Australia) in 2001 and in 2002 we returned to Geelong Darts Club. Until this time only Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia showed a continued interest in the Legends concept.

In 2003 at Gosford saw the inclusion of a token membership from Queensland. Since then the Legends movement in Australia has grown to include other areas of Australia, like Far North Queensland and Tasmania. Currently Legends Australia boasts a membership in excess of 575, who compete in the week-long annual event.

Games consist of both men's and ladies' teams, doubles, mixed doubles and singles across divisions from Premier to Division 4. Whilst still very competitive within each division, it is considered the Friendship Games, with dart players travelling Australia-wide each year, and making new friends and catching up with old friends, all with the love of the game of darts in common.

For more information visit <http://www.ausdartslegends.com.au/>

Thanks again to George Foster for bringing this great organisation to my attention.

DAVID KING LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

Supreme darts fan and master webmaster, David King, has recently announced the launch of his new website Darts01.com. David told me:

In short, it is Darts501.com and Darts-UK.co.uk rolled into one, upgraded and added to! There are currently around 70 pages to explore covering darts. There are free downloads and a few new 'techy' functions added. A few have given me some feedback and it has been very positive. People love it.

Dart501.com was, in my view, one of the best darts-related websites *ever*. How can you improve on that? Check out Darts01.com and find out!



IS THIS HISTORY-MAKING IN SCOTLAND?

I am indebted to Jim MacNeil for forwarding me a copy of his British Inter Counties Championship (BICC) Scotland Report for Weekend 2 – November 2018. Jim writes:

The top story from this weekend's matches has to come from the Tay Valley versus Perthshire game where Brian Macleod Jr and Brian MacLeod Sr took both the Men's Player of the Match awards. Could this be a bit of Scottish, or even BDO, darting history? Has a father and son ever won the respective Player of the Match awards in both Men's 'A' and 'B' matches before?

My 'Records' database does not show this ever being achieved before so is it a piece of darting history or not? If any reader knows of a similar thing happening within the BICC set up ever before please contact me at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

Readers will be interested to know that Jim has been researching the history of darts in Scotland for a good number of years so if you hold any documents or have any information about darts in Scotland generally or the Scottish Darts Association (SDA) in particular then please drop me an e-mail and I will pass your details on to Jim.

NODOR CHALLENGE CUP – THE 'NODOR FOURS'

Way, way back, nearly a year ago in fact, subscriber Kevin Mezza from Belfast wrote:

Hi Patrick, I recently purchased the Guinness Book of Darts and in it I came across a competition called the Nodor 4's but it doesn't explain what the format was or how it was played. After trying Google I couldn't find any information on the competition. Can you shed any light on the subject? Many thanks, Kevin.

Due to various things happening in my life during the past twelve months I was unable to properly research Kevin's enquiry for a few months. I knew I had the answer somewhere. It was just a question of finding the time to explore it properly. I appreciate many readers of DDN will know nothing about the NODOR FOURS so before I answer Kevin's specific query here's an outline of the tournament.

During the 1950s the famous NODOR Company Ltd., was based in Stratford, east London. In 1956 Johnny Ross, a Salesman for the company set out to organise the first running of the NODOR Fours, in the Essex County area only. The finals of that inaugural tournament were held at the *Doctor Johnson* public house in Ilford and the winners were a team from the *Hare and Hounds* in Braintree.

Such was the success of the tournament that in 1958 it was expanded to include London, Surrey and Sussex and in 1959, teams from Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire were added. (The photo here shows Johnny Ross, a former member of the famous *News of the World* Team of Darts Champions, at a promotional event for NODOR circa 1958/59.

Image © NODOR International. Used with permission.))



In 1961 NODOR announced that

because of the continued success of our Darts Competition, we have decided to extend the area to include the whole of ENGLAND and WALES. The competition will be run under the guidance of the respective County Darts Associations and the organiser Mr. Johnny Ross.

It should be noted that, at the time, a competition between darters from England and Wales was regarded as 'National' even though it did not extend to Scotland and Northern Ireland. The same could be said of the *News of the World* Individual Championship which was lauded as 'National' when it restarted after the end of the Second World War even though entrants were technically only from England and Wales.

The NODOR Fours was a tournament that was the latest in a line of darts competitions in different formats. The *News of the World* Individual Championship started it all in 1927 and later in the mid-1930s the *Sunday Pictorial* ran a mixed tournament and in 1939 *The People*, yet another Sunday newspaper, introduced the Lord Lonsdale Team Championships for teams of eight. The NODOR Fours, as the title indicates was for smaller teams of four and in 1961 at least was sponsored, not by a Sunday newspaper but by the brewers Guinness, the finals in London being heralded as 'The "Toucan" Finals' after one of that company's popular logos.

It had appeared that the NODOR Four rules had, at one stage, been lost to history. However, thanks to a donation of records relating to the establishment of the Sussex County darts organisation dating back to 1954, which I received some years ago, they are no longer 'lost'.

Here then are the rules of the NODOR Fours as published in 1961:



NODOR

CHALLENGE CUP

Closing date : Saturday 25th March 1961

RULES

- (a) This Competition is open to all Houses, Clubs, Works and Business House Teams throughout ENGLAND and WALES.
- (b) Each team will be allowed to register SIX players and more than one team may be entered from any house or club. NO PLAYER WILL BE ELIGIBLE TO PLAY FOR MORE THAN ONE TEAM.
- (c) The Competition will be run on a knockout basis and each COUNTY will be zoned into areas. This will avoid travelling in the early rounds. THE WINNERS OF EACH AREA WILL PLAY OFF ON THE COUNTY FINALS NIGHT TO DECIDE THE COUNTY CHAMPION TEAM. The County Champions will play off in the respective AREA finals. AREA champions will play off on GRAND FINALS night which will take place on a Saturday in London before Christmas 1961.
- (d) The Competition is to be played throughout on the Nodor "Bristle" dartboard.
- (e) Games will be FOUR A SIDE, 801 up, straight start, finish on a double (Bull will count double 25), best two legs of three. Teams shall toss for throw in the first leg, the loser of the toss shall throw first in the second leg. Should a third leg be necessary, the teams shall toss again to decide first throw. Local rules will apply during the preliminary rounds. COUNTY FINALS, AREA FINALS and GRAND FINALS will be played under the rules of the NATIONAL DARTS ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN.
- (f) **ENTRY FEE.** All teams shall pay FIVE SHILLINGS entry fee. This sum being a DONATION to promote the game of darts through the COUNTY DARTS ASSOCIATION and the whole amount without deduction will be handed to them.
- (g) **Any team not in attendance by 9 p.m. their opponents shall claim the match if they so desire.**
- (h) The Competition will be under the supervision of the County Darts Associations concerned and Mr. Johnny Ross, the organiser. Their decision on all matters shall be final. All correspondence regarding games up to and including County Finals should be sent to the secretary of your County Darts Association, after the County Finals correspondence to be sent to the organiser, Mr. Johnny Ross.
- (i) **PRIZES—GRAND FINALS.** Winners shall receive the "Nodor" Challenge Cup to be held for one year, also each player (six) shall receive a prize. Runners up, each player (six) shall receive a prize, Semi-finalists shall receive consolation prizes.
AREA FINALS. Winners shall receive a trophy to be held for one year, also each player (six) shall receive a prize. Runners-up, each player (six) shall receive a prize.
COUNTY FINALS. Winners shall receive a trophy to be held for one year, also each player (six) shall receive a prize. Runners-up, each player (six) shall receive a prize.

CLOSING DATE FOR ENTRIES SATURDAY 25th MARCH 1961

Please retain these rules

The NODOR Fours ran, as a 'national' competition from 1961 until 1980.

During 1981 it was formally announced that the tournament had ceased. Thus the event that culminated in the 1980 final was the last of its kind. The last winners of the tournament that year was the team from the *Swan Inn*, Bicester, Oxfordshire (comprising Bob Sampson, Joe Dodd, Gary Howells and Wilf Hearne) who beat the *Puddlers Arms*, Rhymney, Gwent, South Wales.

Despite the NODOR Fours ending there was a report in *Darts World* in January 1982 stating that, although the tournament was no more, organisers in London and Home Counties had

decided to continue the competition within their own region. The ‘new’ tournament was to be known as the 1982 South Home Fours. The closing date for entries was 16th January 1982 with teams being invited to participate from London, Surrey, Sussex, Kent, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Hertfordshire, Middlesex and Essex. However, to date, I have found no record of that ‘Fours’ event ever taking place.

When I was able, at last, to tell Kevin Mezza that I could answer his question he replied

Wow! Patrick I thought you had forgotten about me. I must say I’m amazed at your perseverance.

Kevin, I always come up with an answer *eventually*!

THE GRAFTON SOLID RUBBER DARTBOARD

And talking of being a bit late, I am indebted to my good friend Patrick ‘The Curator of Darts’ Dee who e-mailed me in February **2017** saying

I recently picked up from a market trader in Clacton a solid rubber dart board. On the rear of the board it has written "GRAFTON SOLID RUBBER DARTBOARD". Its appearance indicates it's on the old side but other than that I have no idea.

Some readers may be wondering how a rubber dartboard could ever work bearing in mind that, surely, that would lead, literally, to ‘bounce outs’ every time. However, I can guarantee that this is/was not the case; the darts penetrating the rubber silently and staying in.

However, I had to admit that I knew nothing about the Grafton board (pictured, right) and had never heard of the company name so I told Patrick I would include it in the March 2017 *DDN* but, for whatever reason, it was not included. Only a conversation with Patrick just before Christmas reminded me that I had never mentioned it in *DDN*. It’s two years late but here it is.



It looks just like any other ‘old’ dartboard. It is configured like any other ‘trebles’ board, the only difference being that it is not made of sisal or wood but of rubber.

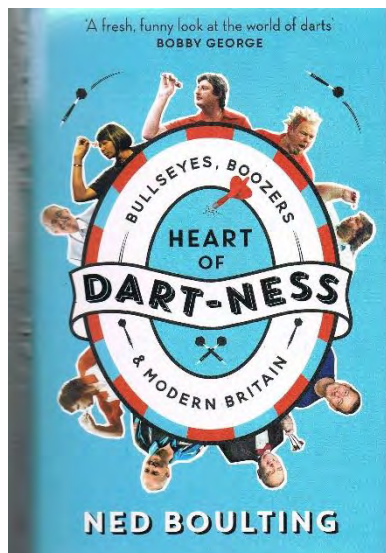
Do you recognise the name ‘Grafton’? Can you help with any information about this very unusual dartboard? If you can then please contact me at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

Also, do *you* know of any dartboards made of unusual materials? I recall reading an article about Australian darts in an issue of the 1930s newspaper *Darts and Sports Weekly News*

where a dartboard had been made out of **gum**. Maybe this had similar properties to the rubber dartboard mentioned above.

BOOK REVIEW – *HEART OF DARTNESS* – NED BOULTING

Ned Boulting is a sports journalist and commentator who has in recent years emerged as one of, if not the, best darts interviewers in the country.



About three years ago he contacted me about his book project. Ned wrote:

I'm embarking on the daunting task of writing a book about darts, and am reading your excellent history [Darts in England 1900-39 – A social history] as a starting point. [My] book itself is my own personal take on "Dartland" - the view of an intrigued outsider, given a glimpse behind the curtain, if you will. It will be mostly anecdotal, and written (I hope) to pay respect to and celebrate the unique culture of the game, and how it has evolved and continues to evolve. So, your unimprovable history will be very valuable, and quoted at length!

We exchanged e-mails and views over a few weeks and just before Christmas Ned's book *Heart of Dart-ness – Bullseyes, Boozers & Modern Britain* appeared on the bookshelves.

In essence I don't need to write a review of the book as it is *exactly* as Ned described in his initial e-mail to me. It is indeed a 'glimpse behind the curtain' and a celebration of the unique culture of darts but it is a glimpse by someone intrigued to learn more about the sport; someone who doesn't take the past of darts for granted, someone who seeks out the truth and some of the most influential players of the past and present.

With the chapters cunningly interlinked with quotes from Joseph Conrad's literary classic *Heart of Darkness* Ned takes us on a personal expedition into the heart of *dart-ness*. It's certainly an original and refreshing approach from someone who originally knew little about the sport with which he has become increasingly involved.

Drawing on his recent experience of covering some of the sport's most important tournaments for ITV he tracks down and interviews some of the legends of darts including Keith Deller, Andy Fordham and 'Big Cliff' Lazarenko. I was particularly pleased to see the latter included. 'Big Cliff' has been, quite literally, a giant in the world of darts for many years yet, as far as I am aware, no author, until Ned, has paid tribute to the man in any book.

The one person Ned was keen to interview on his journey was Eric Bristow and the theme of hunting down The Crafty Cockney permeates the book. Sadly though the eventual audience with Eric was relatively short; a brief meeting at a nightclub in Clapham. Sadly, a while later the crafty one passed away.

For the first time in ages, the early history of our sport is well covered and accurate. However, what is special about *Heart of Dart-ness* is that the book will not only appeal to

everyone who is interested in or plays darts but it also reaches out to those who are not ‘of darts’, those who are curious to learn what darts is really all about: an education perhaps for the middle classes who so often in the past have turned their noses up at the game and shied away from learning more but who perhaps now, if this book is brought to their attention, be encouraged to learn about one of the fastest-growing games in the history of global sport.

Ned Boulting, *Heart of Dart-ness – Bullseyes, Boozers & Modern Britain* (London: Blink Publishing, 2018) ISBN 978-1-788700-47-4, Ebook 978-1-788700-48-1. Hardback. 342 pages, £16.99.

WIN! Yes! One lucky subscriber to *DDN* can win a copy of Ned’s book. All you have to do is answer this simple question the answer to which can be found in the text of this review.

Quotes from which of Joseph Conrad’s classic books link the chapters of Ned’s book?

Please send you answers to me at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com ensuring that you QUOTE THE CAPITAL LETTER that features in the subject line of the e-mail to which this *DDN* is attached. Entries must be received by me no later than midday on 27th January.

GOOD LUCK!

CAN UK READERS HELP IN SEARCH FOR CANAL-SIDE PUBS WITH DARTS?

Dave Render from Australia (previously South Africa) who plans to visit the UK this coming April writes

For many years top of my bucket list has been to spend a week on a narrow boat. Now for your knowledge. I would like you to suggest a canal where I can stop at pubs, sample local brew and have grub. Most importantly, I would like to play darts.

I replied

Although I live not far from a canal that stretches from my home town about 10-15 miles to the county town it has no pubs along its route.



(The pub pictured above right is a riverside inn not far from where I live called the Ferry Boat. The photo, taken circa 1974, was at a time when you *could* play darts there but, sadly, no longer.) (Image: PC Collection.) I continued

I can't really help with advice on canal pubs and darts as things change so very quickly. The tendency nowadays, as canals are mainly now used for recreation rather than transporting goods, is for pubs alongside canals to cater more or less entirely for the passing trade thus

concentrating on food and drink and provision for children and families rather than providing pub games. Take down a dartboard and that releases room for a couple more tables.

So, over to subscribers in the UK to suggest both pubs in which darts can be found alongside or very near to, British canals. Contact me at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com and I'll pass the information on to Dave. Thanks.

TONY SONTAG – RECORDING STAR

During a discussion in one of my local pubs over the festive period, talk turned to those players who were lost us in 2018. When the name of Tony Sontag came up, I was reminded that he was one of the darts stars who sung on a pop record titled '180!' released in 1981. Listed on the reverse of the picture sleeve is the 'Darts Team' singers headed by Bobby George with Jocky Wilson, Angus Ross, Kevin White, Tony and Gordon Allpress. Sadly Jocky, Angus and Kevin are also now longer with us.



We all know where Bobby is, but what of Gordon Allpress?

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