

# DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 111

June 2019



## DDN REACHES THE SOLOMON ISLANDS!

In fact, unbeknown to me, *DDN* has been read in the Solomon Islands for some time; copies being forwarded to that country by the intrepid globe-trotting darts ambassador, Dr. Eddie Norman. However, earlier this year was the first time I had been contacted by darts fans in that country.



An e-mail received in April read:

*Greetings Dr. Patrick, My name is Leon Alvarez and I write to you from our home in the beautiful Solomon Islands.*

*I live in Honiara (pictured left) with my brother Felix and our parents.*

*The Solomon Islands is the Fifth largest Oceanian country by population behind Australia,*

*Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Fiji and then the Solomon Islands. We speak English here and this because the country was previously the British Solomon Islands.*

*I work at Honiara International Airport. I also run with my brother a growing sports business mainly selling equipment for Australian Rules Footie, diving, cricket and Rugby Union; four of the national sports in our country. The Solomons are made up of six large islands and Guadalcanal, where I live, is the largest.*

*Recently we welcomed for the third time to speak to us Dr. Eddie Norman who was visiting us after a visit to Fiji. Since his first visit Eddie has been forwarding me copies of your monthly darts magazine which I forward on to darts enthusiasts here and to all my customers. Eddie said you would not mind. Eddie also gave me two of your darts books.*

[Eddie is pictured, right, on a visit to Fiji in September 2014]

*Six years ago Eddie visited us and told us to get involved in adding darts to our sports business, and he arranged for us to receive darts supplies from Australia and New Zealand through his contacts.*



*As a result we now distribute darts and dartboards to Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Vanuatu, Nauru, Tuvalu, Tahiti, and other Pacific Territories and the sport is catching on fast and we cannot thank Eddie enough for his help.*

*Eddie gave us the contacts and the introductions, and he forwards your darts magazine to them each month. Altogether he was showing me how he forwards it on to more than 400 people, probably more, also darts organisations and leagues around the world from what he calls his 'Darts Bible' every month.*

*Each visit Eddie tells my brother and I about your work and praises you up as the greatest darts writer of the 21st Century and the most knowledgeable person on darts history which reading the two books he gave me I know is true.*

*Our darts business is getting bigger every month.*

*The purpose of my writing is that, very sadly, Eddie tells us that he is retiring next January from his 'Sage of World Darts' tours and the recent visit was his last to see us.*

*We will never ever forget the help and sport this great British Ambassador of darts has done for us here in the South Pacific.*

*We had a farewell barbecue and presentation evening the night before Eddie left and my parents who he stays with on his visits and many of the guests had tears in their eyes as he made his farewell speech.*

*In January, Darts will not realise the loss to the sport of darts of no longer having Eddie as a British darts Ambassador in the Southern Hemisphere. Without doubt he is as we say here a 'one off'.*

What a thrill it is for me to know that *DDN* is being read all around the Pacific Territories and that is entirely due to Eddie Norman.

It is indeed very sad that Eddie Norman, who is a great friend of mine, is giving up his 'Sage of World Darts' tour next January. Eddie has been invaluable in spreading the word about my books and research and *Dr. Darts' Newsletter*. He has certainly helped to raise my profile across the globe and, for that, I will always be in his debt.

Of course, I will be writing more about Eddie nearer to the time of his 'retirement'.

### **‘JOCKY WILSON SAID’**

You may recall that in *DDN* # 108 I reported on the BBC Scotland television production team visiting my home and interviewing me about the life of the late Scottish darts star, and twice World Professional Darts Champion, Jocky Wilson.

I am very pleased to say that the programme, with the title *Jocky Wilson Said* was broadcast on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May at 9 p.m. on BBC Scotland but was accessible for many fans via various satellite channels and, afterwards, BBC iPlayer. I was featured in a number of segments and am very proud to have been associated with the project.

## DARTS QUIZ

I am indebted to David King (he of [www.darts501.com](http://www.darts501.com) fame) for notifying me of his Darts Quiz which can be found at Take a look. It's at <https://www.darts501.com/Darts-Quiz.html>

There are a lot of really testing questions, many of which, I have to confess, I couldn't answer. I could have looked them up but then that would be cheating!

Thanks David.

## THE PLASTICINE ® DARTBOARD – CAN YOU HELP?

John Howie, one of my long-time Scottish subscribers, contacted me recently about a dartboard he purchased in a car boot sale some years ago. John wrote:

*I wonder if you could tell me anything about the dartboard pictured, it's the old Plasticine ® type but has no trebles, I thought it might be a London or Lincoln board but decided to ask the expert.*



*In cases such as these I can usually identify the dartboard more or less straight away but this one has me flummoxed. I replied to John as follows:*

*That's a good, clean example of a Plasticine ® dartboard but what 'style' is it? It's not a Lincoln or Yorkshire Board. The giveaway is the 25 (outer bull). Neither the Lincoln nor Yorkshire has one.*

*So this could be a hybrid.*

*I've always believed that the sequence of the development of today's 'standard' dartboard was 1) miniature archery target, 2) London Fives (the original 'clock' board with 12 segments), 3) Yorkshire Board (doubles and bull) then 4) the 'London' trebles board (added trebles and outer bull). The board you have is somewhere between 3 and 4 and, to be honest, I cannot find any regional dartboard in my archive that fits the bill.*

So DDN readers. It's over to you. Is this a regional dartboard, played only specifically in one area of the UK? Do you recognise the style of this dartboard? If so, please contact me at [patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com](mailto:patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com).

## BIG DARTS - IS SIZE IMPORTANT? - FEEDBACK

Referring to the large Unicorn darts featured in last month's DDN from Thailand, David Brook writes:

*Dear Patrick, It's another hot day here in North East Thailand (40+ degrees C)....and I've just enjoyed reading your bumper edition of DDN and so many hot news items! I was most interested in the Beer Mats piece and the big dart picture featuring John Lowe. If my memory serves me right the 1988 Big Dart photo was taken on the steps of Federation Brewery offices...and I was there!!*

*Whilst browsing some old files I also came across another picture featuring John and a big dart, actually taken inside the Brewery offices. I believe... the photo dates to 1993. It was taken to publicise the fact the Federation Brewery was linked to two World Champions.....that being John winning his third World Championship and the fact that LCL Pils had previously been crowned as the Best Bottled Lager in The World at the 1987 International Brewers Competition. Great promotional opportunities with two World Champions!! Certainly a time to celebrate...*



**[Lager Note:** David told me that the initials 'LCL' stood for 'Low Carbohydrate Lager' which was very popular in the North East of England and in parts of the Midlands for a number of years.]

In addition to the 'big dart' photo above, David also sent me a scan of a Federation Brewery beer mat featuring John Lowe. He wrote:



*I was also interested in the Beer Mats piece...just wondered if you had this one in your collection. Apart from John, has any dart player ever featured on a beer mat? Reckon it must be unique...*

As regards darts players on beer mats, I was sorry to have to inform David that the Federation/John Lowe beer mat is not unique.

John also appeared as one six players in a set of beer mats featuring the Marlboro Team of Champions and, with Leighton Rees, is mentioned on the reverse of a mat advertising '1982 Special 'Darts' Cruises' on board P&O's flagship Canberra'. Jim Pike's record of 'Round the Board on Doubles' (3 minutes, 30 seconds in 1937) is featured on an old Guinness mat whilst Eric Bristow can be found on an (undated) Austin Showroom Darts mat. Jocky Wilson is mentioned on a Dewar's Scotch Whisky mat. No picture. Just facts about him as a 'Sporting Hero'. Andy Fordham can be found on a mat promoting numeracy and Phil Taylor appears on a promotional beer mat for British Whale's cover of Sparks' *This Town Ain't Big Enough for Both of Us* which was released in 2005.

This cannot surely be a complete list. Do you know of any others? Let me know at [patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com](mailto:patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com).

## BACK TO 'BIG DARTS'...

Dr. Eddie Norman e-mailed me as follows:

*Patrick. What a wonderful tribute to Les France. Just a line to say that The House of Darts International also had a large dart that travelled the world with me on my travels, and at one time formed part of my 'Sage of World Darts' lecture tour.*

*It even travelled with us to Buckingham Palace, when we were asked to bring something striking as a talking point on our visit. It did cause quite a stir as you can imagine and had to go through Palace security.*

*Our dart stood in the front of The House of Darts International doorway for over forty years and visited Australia, New Zealand, Russia Japan and Europe many times.*

In addition, I am, once again, grateful to Jay Tomlinson for feedback from the US; this time with regard to large darts. Jay wrote:

*Thank you for the wonderful bumper edition of May DDN. After reading your story "Size – Does it Matter" I just had to send you the following cover photo on the April 1991 issue of Bull's-Eye News of the famous Dart Pub in St. Louis MO, **Blueberry Hill**.*

*As you can clearly see, the dart pierces the building at the corner and scores a perfect treble 20. I dare say the dart is a bit longer than the one John Lowe is holding.*



Thanks Jay. I have also received further information from John Lowe about yet another 'big dart' but I will leave that until the next issue.

## A DIRECTORY OF DARTS AND DARTBOARDS COMPANIES?

Robert Denton from Seattle, Washington, USA recently wrote

*Hello Dr. Chaplin, First, let me say I am greatly humbled by your contributions to this game we love, and to History in general. Thank you for that. Also, one of the areas of darts history that sparks my imagination the most are the artefacts. Mostly darts and dartboards, and this has led me to wonder about the makers of these artefacts.*

*The big ones are known: Unicorn, Winmau, Nodor, etc. But have you ever compiled a list of all the known dart makers through history, large and small, surviving or defunct? I would be interested in such a list. I would further be interested in compiling information on them myself!*

*Thank you for taking the time to read this, and thanks in advance for any information you have in this area.*

I replied to Robert as follows:

*Thanks for your e-mail. Thanks too for your kind words about my research.*

*I must admit that I have never even thought of preparing a list of darts and dartboard manufacturers mainly because such a list would take a very long time to compile and, to be honest, it would never be entirely accurate.*



### **Trooping the Colour - Kwiz style!**

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*This is mainly because although you were able to name 'the Big Ones', WINMAU, UNICORN, NODOR, to which could be added, off the top of my head, HARROWS, TARGET and PUMA, the number of companies that made darts and dartboards that no longer exist are too numerous to mention. Again, off the top of my head, famous names of the past here in the UK would include ABBEY, TRULON, DORWIN, KWIZ all now disappeared, although some KWIZ products are still available via Retriever Sports. [The KWIZ advertisement shown here was featured in the March 1974 issue of *Darts World*.]*

*There is also the question as to whether the darts and dartboards are actually made by those companies or simply bought in from, in the case of darts, a light-engineering company who manufacture the goods on each company's behalf. One example was the Jim Pike Company which began trading in the mid-1940s.*

*There were also manufacturers such as Schofield's which started out as a one-man band: one man in his shed providing darts for his local pubs which later expanded into a small business. Then you have the last surviving wooden dartboard, the Manchester Board, which is peculiar to that city, the boards being made by one individual craftsman.*

*The first darts to be utilised in England were 'flechettes', small, unweighted, wooden darts with turkey flights. These were imported from France in great numbers towards the end of the nineteenth century for use primarily by fairgrounds and later in English pubs. English toy companies also purchased these 'French darts' to sell to children. The first English (rather than British) darts manufacturing companies did not appear until the 1920s. The leader in that field at that time was NODOR which, as you know, still trades today.*

*The full history of the darts industry in England up until the beginning of the Second World War is chronicled in my book *Darts in England 1900-39 - A Social History* (Manchester:*

*Manchester University Press, Hardback 2009 (out of print). Paperback 2012. Still available.) Chapter 6.*

*Thus, when you take into account non-British manufacturers and more recently the burgeoning soft-tip darts trade, you can see what a difficult task it would be to prepare a list of all dart/dartboard manufacturers.*

Robert replied:

*I really appreciate the time you took and the detail in the message...I am a hobbyist...with a sparse (if venerable, as the web goes) blog (The Dart Indoors)... <http://zeeple.blogspot.com>*

*I am still digesting the information you shared with me and it is making me rethink my take on the subject. I think I would like to do a "deep dive", as it were, on some now-defunct darts equipment maker and see how I do with it. Thanks again for the information!*

I wish Robert well with his project and look forward to receiving details of his research in due course.

## SHANGHAI – THE MAGAZINE – FEEDBACK

In last month's *DDN* I mentioned two darts magazines *Shanghai* and *Darts International* edited by Kent-based Vera Love and asked if there was any information readers could provide about the number of issues and longevity of those magazines.

Thus my thanks to Arthur Hook of Dublin who told me

*Pat, as regards Shanghai magazine, they had only four issues, (1) December 1975, (2) January/February 1976, (3) March 1976 and (4) April 1976. As regards Darts International, like yourself, I think it ended with [Volume 4] Issue No. 4.*

Arthur also told me that, according to his archive, there were 21 issues of *Darts International* published spanning February 1979 to April 1982.

I have issue No. 2 of *Darts International* in my archive which is dated March 1979 (pictured right) which, interestingly, is signed by John Lowe).

As proof of the cessation of *Darts International* Arthur provided me with a copy of a letter from Vera Love, dated 31<sup>st</sup> March 1982, returning his £5.00 subscription for a further 12 months, the reason being that 'the magazine is being taken over by another firm.'



The last issue I have in my archive (undated but circa April 1982) still shows Vera Love as Managing Editor. As far as Arthur and I know there were no further issues of *Darts*

*International* published: no sign of ‘another firm’ taking on the magazine. Mind you, I could be wrong. Perhaps *DDN* readers know different. If so, please contact me.

## AMBIDEXTROUS DARTS PLAYERS – FEEDBACK

I have been amazed by the amount of feedback I have received relating to ambidextrous darts players in the April and May issues of *DDN* and only have room this month for feedback received from John Thornton, of London, Ontario, Canada who has played in the London and District League for 46 years and was President of the League for 13 years. John writes:

*Thanks for your last issue Patrick. I read with considerable interest the article on ambidextrous players. This reminded me of one of our city league members, the late Joe Senese who was a very good right-handed but because of a shoulder complaint was forced to throw left-handed. As a result he became the only player at that time to hit 180's with both hands. That record may still stand. I believe it occurred in the '70's but not certain.*

## AND FINALLY...

...and talking of handedness, belated congratulations to left-handed darts legend Alan Glazier for reaching the ripe old age of 80!

Known as ‘The Man in Black’ and also ‘The Ton Machine’, Alan, a former England player, achieved this milestone in January. (How could I possibly have missed it?)

Despite some folks in darts calling Alan a ‘nearly man’ it only takes a cursory look at Alan’s darting achievements, in particular during the 1970s and 1980s, to prove that he was nothing of the sort. The autographed photograph shown here dates back to when he was a member of the prestigious Marlboro Team of Champions.



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