

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

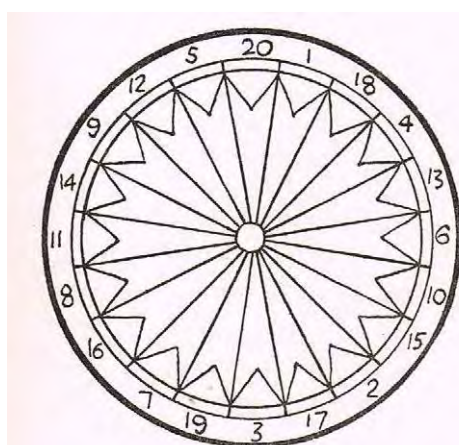
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THE TONBRIDGE DARTBOARD A *DDN* SPECIAL ISSUE

In the past I have only very occasionally produced a special *DDN* which focussed for the bulk of the issue on one specific matter, such as dartitis and the death of Eric Bristow. I never imagined for one moment that I would prepare one about a *dartboard*.



However, while recently preparing fresh articles for my new website I went back into my archives with the idea of producing something about regional dartboards. It was during that research I came across a substantial amount of material about the **Tonbridge Dartboard**. I discovered that I held on file information that could never be found in the public domain: not yet anyway.

The draft article developed into something much bigger than I originally anticipated so I decided to share it with subscribers to *DDN* before posting it on my new website. As is so often the case with my early research the key initial lead came from Rupert Croft-Cooke.

Rupert Croft-Cooke was, as some of you may know, an itinerant author who it seems could, and did, write about anything and everything. His importance to our sport is that he was the very first person to write a book exclusively about darts. Ingeniously titled *Darts*, Croft-Cooke's book was published in London by Geoffrey Bles in December 1936.

On pages 14 and 15 of *Darts*, Croft-Cooke, having described the standard dartboard, turns to the more unusual boards he had played on in his travels. He wrote:

*Passing though Kent one evening, and itching (as we followers of the game **do** itch) for darts, you are once again faced with the unfamiliar. This plan of doubles and trebles is known as the **Tonbridge** game...How Tonbridge came to foster a special rule of darts is a mystery, but then the whole history of the game is clouded with enigma. On these boards the **outer** scores treble, the little triangle behind it is the double, and this gives rise to some almost fantastic possibilities.*

Over four decades later, Keith Turner in his book *Darts – The Complete Book of the Game* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1980) wrote of the Tonbridge Board

*Used in the Tonbridge-Sevenoaks area of Kent, this board's other name of the Trebles board denotes its special peculiarity: what would be the **doubles** ring on a London board is used as*

*the **trebles** ring. The numbering of the segments and general dimensions are the same as the London board but there is no outer bull and no ‘conventional’ trebles ring. The doubles on this board consist of triangular beds inside the trebles which calls for some fine throwing indeed!*

AKA ‘THE HAMPSHIRE/BASINGSTOKE DARTBOARD’

I originally spoke to a gentleman named Bob Flew back in late December 2013. He had contacted me about a letter he planned to send to his favourite professional darts player about what he called ‘The Hampshire/Basingstoke Dartboard’.

Bob told me

*“The dartboard was the same size as the present one, wires, etc., but with no treble ring or outer bull’s-eye. The outer doubles ring was, on the **Basingstoke Board**, the treble ring and the triangle shapes adjoining that ring (about one inch to one a quarter of an inch) counted as double. The games were double in, double out and thus players had to hit one of these triangular segments to both start and finish a game.”*

Bob checked this detail with his brother-in-law who lived in Ringwood (then aged 98) who confirmed that Bob’s description was correct.

Bob’s description is exactly the same as the ‘Tonbridge Board’ as described by Croft-Cooke.

CURIOUSER AND CURIOUSER – ANOTHER SIGHTING BUT WITH A TWIST

Following the publication of a letter I sent to the *Kent & Sussex Courier* in 1995 I received a letter from a gentleman named Derek Andrews from Tunbridge Wells, Kent. Derek told me that my letter, about the Tonbridge Board, “reminded me that I had such a board.” It was Derek’s plan to restore the board (shown here) and have it displayed at the *Red Dog* pub at High Halstow, near Rochester, Kent, which was at that time being run by his son-in-law’s brother.

The board is clearly a Tonbridge Board of sorts. Derek described the then current condition of the board as follows:

[T]he doubles and trebles segments have been coloured alternatively blue and white. In addition, and somewhat amateurishly, a “standard treble” had later been added with wire and metal staples and with alternative matching blue and white colouring. It would seem logical to assume that the blue and white colouring was not original but added when the crude “standard” treble was created. The added wire and staples have now been carefully removed...As to how it came into my possession I cannot be sure...



If you imagine the colouring and the trebles ring removed then Derek's board would resemble a genuine Tonbridge Board. It appears likely that the treble ring from a standard board was then added, perhaps to bring the Tonbridge board up to date. But then why was no attempt made to add an outer bull?

Presumably, if playing it as a standard board, the outer ring (valued as treble on a Tonbridge Board) would become doubles and the inner triangles (usually scoring double) would have to be ignored. But that doesn't explain the absence of the outer bull. Strange indeed. Any more sittings?

AND SO TO READING, BERKSHIRE

As this article continues, and having travelled through Kent (Tonbridge, Sevenoaks and Chiddingstone Causeway) and Hampshire (Basingstoke) we now move into Berkshire to consider the **Reading** Dartboard which is of exactly the same design as those already considered.

Shocking news was recorded in *Darts Weekly News* in the late summer of 1937 relating to the Simond's brewery darts league from the start of the new season which commenced on Tuesday 5th October. *DWN* reported

*An important change this year will be that all games will be played on the N.D.A. board instead of the **Reading type**.*

I discovered this news snippet during research at the British Newspaper Library in 2005. This led me to write to the Reading Local Studies Library and - WOW! – were they helpful!

I could write a whole chapter on how H & G Simonds' Brewery supported darts during the 1930s but suffice to say that there were many Simonds' darts leagues and the company's house magazine *The Hop Leaf Gazette* regularly featured reports of matches all played on the 'Reading Dartboard'.

I need not describe the Reading Board as the details are the same as already stated **BUT** a 76-year-old respondent to my letter to the *Reading Chronicle* in August 2005 remembered an 'eight foot throw' and that 'you started and finished on a treble'. Another told me that the outer ring was much larger than you would find on a standard dartboard.

Yet another recalled that a local darts player named Chelsea Butler was renowned for his darting skills and was one of the only men to regularly score 300; the maximum on the dartboard (where the bullseye was worth 100 points) at his 'local' *The Bell* in Oxford Road, Reading. The pub was later renamed *The Restoration*.



One of the most interesting photographs of the Reading dartboard was discovered in the March 1936 issue of *The Hop Leaf Gazette*. The actual story is brief. Headlined 'TWO FRIENDS MEET AGAIN AFTER THIRTY YEARS, AT THE HORNCastle, BATH ROAD' the text merely states

Two old friends that had not met for 30 years played a darts match at The Horncastle. Bob Henwood won both games.

Clearly a best of three very friendly match.

The caption to the photograph read ‘(Left) William Abery, aged 74, of Blossom End, Theale, and (Right) Bob Henwood, aged 76, of Calcot Mill, Reading.’

ANOTHER LOCATION

News was published in January 2010 of a local man from Chiddingstone Causeway, Kent who had unearthed ‘a piece of darts history’ earlier in the year at a fête.

According to www.thisiskent.co.uk/news Mark Hinchcliffe had ‘hit the bullseye when he discovered the 1920s board which he believes was originally used in the *Leicester Arms*, in Penshurst.’

The 44-year-old Royal Mail worker, had played darts as a hobby for twenty-five years, playing in local pubs including the *Greyhound* in Charcott which his family used to own and run. Mark (pictured) told the press



*Author and Darts Historian Patrick Chaplin...recognised what it was, a Tonbridge and Sevenoaks trebles board. It just looks old. I haven't played with it. It needs soaking and I am worried about cracking it. **I think it is probably the rarest dartboard in the world.** It is made out of elm. They used to make them out of this years ago. Someone in the village will have cut a bit of elm off and flogged it to the local pub.*

Although I personally doubt the board was ninety years old, it was of some age. I sincerely hope that Mark didn't soak it. As to being ‘the rarest dartboard in the world’ again, I have my doubts. However, having said that Mark had spoken to ‘other collectors’ and told reporters that his ‘90-year-old antique’ had attracted some attention from fellow enthusiasts. Indeed, interest came ‘from collectors as far and wide as Holland and Germany’. Mark was also surprised to find that one man in America was willing to pay \$200 for it (about £125 sterling).

However, the good news at the time was that Mark was hanging on to the board and was continuing to research the history of the item which he believes was used in several pubs locally. He told *Kent Life* “It is an original piece. It's a lovely dartboard.” Indeed it is/was Mark...and an absolute bargain at **50p**.

So the ‘Tonbridge’ (Kent) dartboard has been played in at least three counties (and probably more) but, I have to assume, it is now extinct.

Unless, of course, any *DDN* reader knows different.

(With special thanks to Gwilym Games, Librarian at the Reading Local Studies Library and with acknowledgements to www.thisiskent.news. Colour photograph © 1995 Derek G. Andrews.)

DAN PEEK - A FELLOW DARTS HISTORIAN



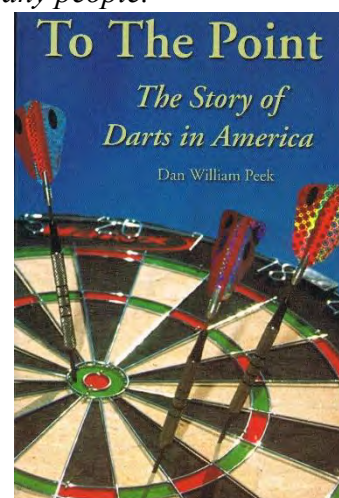
It was with great sadness that I only recently learned that Dan Peek, the author of *To The Point – The Story of Darts in America* (2001) passed away on Memorial Day this year. Dan's wife Joy told me

"He had been in poor health for several months and even though his will of survival was great, his body did not agree. We will all miss him terribly, but he lived an eventful life and meant so much to so many people."

As darts researchers, Dan and I had great respect for each other and I was thrilled when he gave me a mention on the cover of the revised edition of his book. I would always cite Dan's pioneering work whenever possible. With little or no leads to follow as regards the history of the sport of darts in the USA, Dan took on an Herculean task but he was up to the challenge. I was personally grateful to him for helping dispel the long-held myth that darts was brought to the USA on *The Mayflower*.

To The Point was a ground-breaking book and set a foundation on which other researchers could base their own work.

RIP Dan.



MEMORIES OF JOCKY WILSON – RAB SMITH – PART 2

In the second part of Rab Smith's memories of knowing Jocky Wilson, (recorded recently in an interview with freelance journalist Eddie Reid) Rab has an 'odour' to deal with. Eddie writes

Scotland were playing an away match in the Home Internationals against Ireland. (Rab can't remember the year but thinks it might have been 1979 or 80?) The Scotland team consisted of Rab Smith (Captain), Jocky Wilson and Angus Ross. They were booked into the same hotel room, which had three single beds.

The day they arrived was a rest day for them all as the tournament began the following day. After lunch Rab and Angus retired to their hotel room to chill out and relax before match day. Jocky announced that he felt that he could do with "Just a wee bit more practise" and went out to find a pub!



Later that afternoon, Rab and Angus were lying on top of their respective beds, when Jocky came rolling in, slightly the worse for wear. Rab said, "Have ye had enough practice now?" Jocky replied, "Oh aye!" He kicked his shoes off and collapsed on to his own bed.

*After only a few seconds, Rab said, "What's that bl**dy smell?"*

Jocky replied, "Oh that's maybe my socks Rab. I've had them on for the best part of a week."

Rab said, "That won't do at all man – and you need to do something about it right now."

Jocky responded, "Your right, Rab."

Jocky got off the bed, opened the hotel window and threw his socks down on to the street. He then clambered back on to his bed and fell into a deep sleep.

Rab and Angus just looked at each other!

© Eddie Reid (Photo of Jocky relaxing: PC/DW Archive. Used with permission.)

DAVID KING

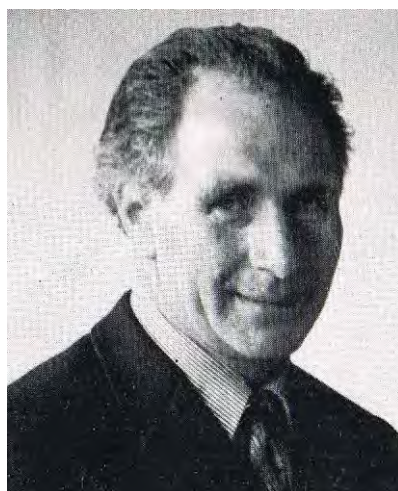
Shortly after the publication of last month's *DDN*, Eddie Reid contacted me to thank me for 'yet another splendid Newsletter.' Eddie added

As you know, Rab worked as a Woodsman for many years and was equally at home with an axe or a chain-saw. This is largely why he maintained his fitness level during his playing career. He is now in his early seventies and he is still an extremely fit man.

He asked me today, to pass on to you an extremely sad piece of news which he received this week. While working in the woods, one of Rab's mentors was a man called, Dave King. They became good friends and Rab discovered that Dave, as well as having an in depth knowledge of the woods, also had a very astute business brain.

When Rab turned professional in 1977, he looked no further than Dave (pictured right) to be his Manager. Dave accepted the responsibility and was Rab's Manager for many years.

Earlier this week, Rab received the sad news that Dave King had passed away at the age of 87. He was wondering if you could perhaps give Dave's passing a brief mention in one of your articles regarding Rab's career, by way of a short obituary. Just a couple of lines would be very much appreciated. Rab is more than happy to leave the wording in your very capable hands.



Eddie, it seems to me that, between you and Rab, you have said all that needs to be said.

COMPUTER CHECKOUT 1982

Oh yes. We did have computers back in 1982...just. Colin S. wrote to me saying

Hello Patrick. I was just watching the BBC documentary about Jocky Wilson and you appeared, a Darts Historian.

Computer Checkout



This month Darts World starts the first of a series of features in which we call on the services of a computer to list the ideal game-shot for any particular number.

Our listing below is for a 101 check-out and has been prepared by computer expert and darts enthusiast Colin Saunders of Chelmsford, Essex. Readers may wish to either photocopy or cut out this page for future reference. Colin's computer programme ensures that

the list contains only "realistic" check-outs and does not duplicate shots. If a number can be achieved with a single dart then it is assumed that the player will throw for a single; if no single score is attainable then it is assumed the player will attempt a treble. In the last resort a double is thrown.

Next month the computer will check-out another favourite finish.

3x17/3x14/2x01	1x18/3x15/2x01	3x19/3x14/2x01	3x20/3x11/2x01
3x17/3x14/2x04	3x18/3x15/2x04	3x19/3x12/2x04	3x20/3x11/2x04
1x50/3x13/2x03	3x15/3x14/2x07	3x15/3x13/2x07	3x17/3x14/2x07
3x17/2x17/2x03	3x19/2x15/2x08	3x20/1x25/2x03	3x15/2x19/2x09
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2x19/1x15/1x50	2x20/1x11/1x50	1x50/1x01/1x50	/ /
3x19/2x20/2x02	3x19/2x19/2x03	1x50/3x15/2x03	3x16/3x15/2x04
3x17/2x20/2x05	3x19/2x17/2x05	3x17/2x19/2x06	3x19/2x15/2x06
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2x19/1x25/2x19	3x20/1x05/2x19	1x50/1x13/2x19	3x11/2x14/2x20
3x16/1x15/2x20	3x17/3x09/2x20	3x17/2x15/2x20	3x16/1x07/2x20
3x09/3x20/1x50	3x10/3x07/1x50	3x11/1x18/1x50	3x12/1x15/1x50
3x16/1x33/1x50	2x16/1x19/1x50	3x17/1x17/1x50	2x17/1x17/1x50

In around 1980/81/82 I completed my training as a computer programmer and used my new found skills and access to an IBM 370 mainframe computer, to calculate every possible way to finish every (finishable) number between 2 and 170 - with either 1, 2 or 3 darts. I sent off the printout of all the results to Darts World magazine, and they published it as a weekly series in the 80's. I'm wondering if you have copies of the magazines with my work. I'd be very interested if you do. Very Best Regards

On checking the back issues of *Darts World* I discovered that in October 1982 the editor had introduced a new series titled 'Computer Checkout' based on Colin's work.

Every month from then on *Darts World* published Colin's computerised outshots each month for a separate number, most of which are associated with the score being achieved by someone famous. For example **138** is accompanied by a piece about Keith Deller's

legendary Embassy finish against Eric Bristow in 1983.

The series ran from October 1982 to August 1983 inclusive: eleven issues.

GAMESMANSHIP – MORE FEEDBACK

Further to the gamesmanship feedback in last month's *DDN*, Pat Resler from Eeling contacted me to say

Thanks for the DDN...good bit about gamesmanship. You'll get some good stories from that. The only one I can think of in my team is Terry H. who, apart from his normal chat, says things like "Taxi for...!", "I don't miss these", "My favourites" or "Last throw [Insert name of his opponent]", if a game is tight and you're on a double. He'll get his darts and either chat to the chalkers or come back and stand right in your eye-line slightly in front of you as you're going for your double. Whether he does it on purpose or not, I don't know, but it always puts me off and I always miss the double. Saying that I always miss the double anyway!!!

But he did do his tactic against a young local lad who at the time was one of the best players around. I watched Dick do it from the bar...and the lad couldn't hit a double and had a nightmare for the rest of the match in his doubles and trebles with us eventually winning the game... Game-shot Terry!!!

Mick S. wrote

Hi Patrick. Great read as ever. [Re. Gamesmanship] I was once at a friendly darts match one of our team had his girlfriend with him at the side of the dartboard was a glass partition. Well, his girlfriend had a very large chest and her top was quite low. As their players went to

throw she pressed herself against the glass. My God did it put the players off! We thought it was funny but some of their players were not amused.

Nor would today's politically correct brigade. Great story though Mick.

Interesting that a glass partition was used in the pub/club mentioned by Mick. That's the first example I've heard of where such a device has been employed to separate players from watchers. Presumably this was at the behest of the Health and Safety police.

Chris K. wrote

A few friends and I have had some fun recalling moments of gamesmanship on the oche. Here's a couple but not sure they are exactly what you're looking for.

1. The landlord of our pub used to have a big tin tray about 2 foot in diameter and every now and again when there was a grudge match he would wait for the opponent to be throwing for the winning double and would 'accidentally' drop the tray. An almighty clatter would destroy the opponent's concentration and have the desired effect.

2. While playing a local team and my teammate was going for a double, his opponent decided to pull my teammates shorts and pants around his ankles. Now that definitely had the desired effect and caused a whole fuss on the oche. Needless to say, my teammate lost.

Another other examples?

FEEDBACK – ANOTHER SATISFIED CUSTOMER AND SOME GREAT NEWS

A recent addition to the *DDN* family is Chris McH. He wrote in praise of *DDN*

Hi Patrick...I would love to subscribe to your newsletter please. I have read some of them on line and have enjoyed immensely. They are very informative and wonderfully written and I thank you for the pleasure that they provide me. I have also read some of your books which have also been a joy and if you are writing more projects in the future I would be grateful to read them. Thanks again for your wonderful penmanship and look forward to reading more from you in the future.

Wow! Talk about blowing my own trumpet! Thanks Chris. However, that does give me a chance to mention that, barring any technical hitches, my new website will be up and running on 1st December.

This is not just my old site updated. This is a brand new website. I have spent many hours removing out-of-date material, updating articles, writing a lot of new stuff and lifting a load of articles from back issues of *DDN*. Mind you, there's still some work to do and, for the first time ever, new material will be added periodically. (The photo here shows me in 1999 when the website was first launched!)

The new site, still www.patrickchaplin.com, will continue to promote *DDN* and it will be easier for new visitors to sign



up. Although it has been suggested I turn *DDN* into a ‘proper blog’ and publish only on the website, I have decided that *DDN* will remain *exclusive* to those darts fans who bother to actually subscribe. Having said that of course all subscribers are welcome to forward *DDN* to their friends and contacts in darts, thus continuing to expand the *DDN* ‘family’ far across the globe. Exclusivity also means that when any competitions are run, only actual subscribers can enter.

In celebration of the launch I will be running an exclusive, easy-to-enter competition in the December issue.

DOUBLE BULL – SOME MORE FEEDBACK

Readers will recall from the October *DDN* that David King argued that ‘double bull’ had little or nothing to do with the US darts game of Cricket. Another subscriber has an alternative view. Dustin S. writes:



Hi Patrick, I have a few comments on the “double bull lingo”.

For one, I think its use in the game of cricket makes a lot of sense. Each 25 is a mark, and each 50 is 2 marks, therefore there is the “single bull” and the “double bull” that score in the same way as a “single 20” and “double 20”.

So why do we (Americans) still call it that when playing ‘01). Well for one, I believe each segment of the board should not get different names depending on the game you play. But I think there is more to it than that.

When the rest of the world describes the game of 501, they say that you must finish the game “on a double or bullseye”. Using the American terminology, we can simply say that you must finish the game “on a double” which inherently includes the 50-zone. So at that rate, I think it simplifies explaining the game. You must finish on a double, and there are 21 doubles on the board. No need to make special exceptions for the bullseye. It’s my opinion that it is a better universal term for both games. Thanks again for putting these newsletters together, it’s a great monthly read (:

Cheers Dustin.

(Image of bullseye © Tip Top Pics. Used with permission.)

And from Seattle ‘Z’ writes

Great edition! I am sharing it with my teammates. The article on gamesmanship is apropos given we are about to start a new league season here in Seattle. Incidentally, I have always called the double bull the “inner bull”. I did not realize the “Double Bull” was a US expression!

I replied to ‘Z.’

That's interesting that you've never heard the expression 'double bull.' Thinking about it, it *might* be that, given the book I quoted from was published in New York, the phrase was used there but not on the West Coast.

Then David W. wrote

I think David King's comments regarding the double-bullseye seem correct to me, and I have heard double bull verbally used in the past. I just had a look at David's website darts501.com and he has loads of information on the site, including the history or past tournament winners. He has an article regarding the term 'bulls-eye' and he says the term could have originated first in window glassmaking before being used as a centre target for archery or darts!

'THE CURATOR OF DARTS' LATEST EXHIBIT

It never ceases to amaze me by how much Patrick Dee's darts-related collection grows every year. People from all around Suffolk and beyond know of Patrick's passion for darts and gladly donate items to him. But recently a contact donated items to Patrick which I have never seen before and, in fact, didn't know that such items existed.

The photograph shows Patrick standing in front of his archive with not one but *two* darts sample cases; one showing examples of brass barrels that are available whilst the other (relating to Farebrother Darts) shows a variety of darts available.

Magnificent stuff!



CONGRATULATIONS

Many congratulations to Olly Croft OBE who reaches his 90th birthday on 17th November and to Trina Gulliver OBE who achieves the bullseye on 30th of this month.

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