

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 117

December 2019



NEW WEBSITE LAUNCHED

Yes. At last! I have launched my new improved, updated, wire-brushed website.

My first website was created for me by a dart-playing friend Sheila Handley back in 1999. It was Sheila who told me (a) I should have a website and (b) that the domain name should be my name rather than 'Darts History'.



That certainly seems to have worked and, twenty years later, many thousands of darts fans have visited and re-visited my site www.patrickchaplin.com.

Due to reasons of neglect and a singular lack of technical skills, I made few, if any, changes during the period 2012 to date. Thus many articles were simply left where they were despite the obvious need for updating or deleting. Because my previous website was in such a parlous state, once I had made the decision to upgrade it has taken me a number of months to review every single

one of the 200+ pages. (The above photo shows the ageing darts historian staring blankly at his new website's front page. Image ©Moppix International. Used with permission.)

Having removed many articles the number of pages fell under 200 but by adding new material the total has risen again. Many of these new articles had previously appeared in *DDN* and *Darts World* magazine but have all been updated and, of course, now will reach a much wider audience. One thing that will happen with my new site is that I *will* be adding pieces on a regular basis so anyone revisiting will usually find new material for them to, hopefully, enjoy.

The site will never be allowed to languish again.

There are some new sections for visitors to discover and much, much more about one of the most popular themes in darts history, the *News of the World* individual darts tournament, questions about which still arrive regularly in my mailboxes.

It wasn't until I began adding articles to my new website that I have gained some idea of the amount of information I have accumulated about darts during nearly 35 years of research. The 200+ pages on view represents a mere fragment of the information I have gathered over that time. I will, therefore, publish as much as I can before the inevitable occurs.

The new site will continue to promote *DDN* but, although it has been suggested that I turn it into a proper blog and publish only on the website, I have decided that it will remain **exclusive** to those darts fans who actually subscribe and thus have a genuine interest in darts (and pub) history.

Having said that of course all subscribers are welcome to forward *DDN* to their friends and contacts in darts, thus expanding the *DDN* 'family' even further across the globe. Exclusivity also means that when any competitions are run, only actual subscribers can enter. (See later in this issue.)

Although I have now formally launched the new website it is still a work in progress and so you will find a few dead ends, pages under construction, or links that still require attention as I continue to work on amending existing and adding new material.

So, there we are. Please view the new www.patrickchaplin.com and let me know what you think.

THE LATE DAN PEEK

In the previous issue of *DDN* I recorded the passing of Dan William Peek, a fellow darts researcher whose book *To The Point* (2001) was the very first attempt by anyone to record the story of darts in America.

As a result of that mention, Dan's wife Joy wrote to me as follows:

Patrick. Thanks so much for the remembrance to Dan in your November newsletter. He would have been pleased with your kind words. He had a lot of fun gathering the information for his dart book, and we truly enjoyed meeting so many dart players during the book promotion. They are a great group of sports men and women that always made us feel welcome. All the best to you and yours.

I just want to echo Joy's comment about darts men and women. In all my years of darts research I have never met any darts player (male or female) who wasn't receptive to my enquiries. Every single one (thus far) has been helpful and pleasant and willing to share their experiences and their time with me.

Long may it continue.

APOLOGIES TO TRINA

My sincere apologies to my great friend Trina Gulliver. I wrote in the last issue that she is an *OBE*! She was, of course, awarded an **MBE**. My thanks to David King for pointing out the error of my ways.

FESTIVE MESSAGE

As always I take this opportunity to wish all those who celebrate the season a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and to every one of my subscribers I send my warmest wishes for a very happy, successful, peaceful and productive 2020.

The cartoon shown here (© 1985 Chip. Used with permission) was first published in *The Bullshead – The Official Organ of the BBMDC* (the Blue Boar Men's Darts Club) of which I was a member (and sometimes even Captain) back in the 1980s. What great days they were.

Sadly subsequent owners of the *Blue Boar* took the dartboard down more than a decade ago and replaced it (and all around the surrounding walls) with rather awful artwork. Darts has never returned to the *Blue*.



EXCLUSIVE WEBSITE LAUNCH COMPETITION

I hinted earlier that this issue might feature an exclusive competition **for DDN subscribers only** and here it is...

Thanks to my sponsors I have not one but **FIVE** sets of top quality signature darts to give away to five lucky winners. The darts (all steel tip) are signed by the individual players and they are (pictured):



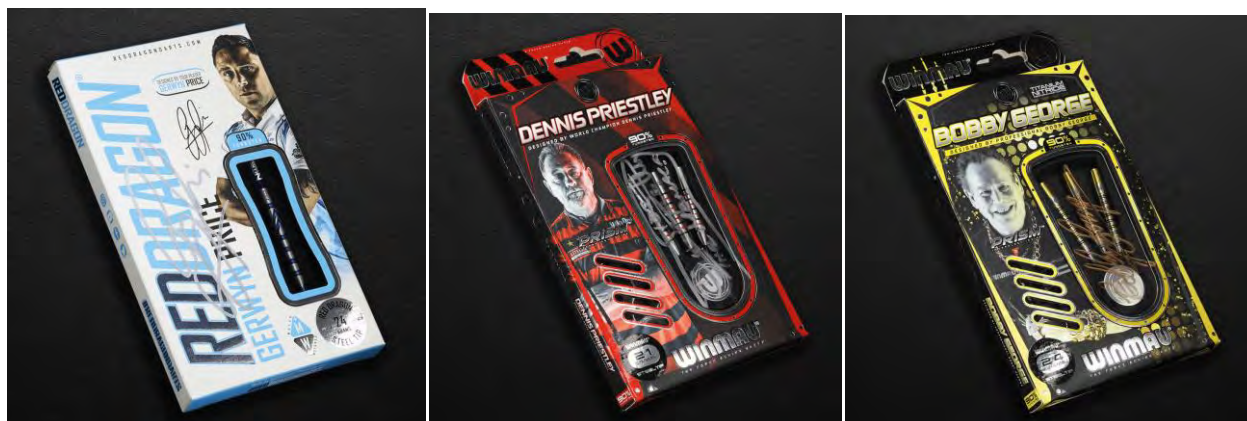
Bobby George - WINMAU 24 grams 90% tungsten designed by the man himself.

Colin Lloyd – RED DRAGON 22 grams Premium Tungsten – Blue

Dennis Priestley – WINMAU 21 grams 90% tungsten designed by Dennis

Jonny Clayton – RED DRAGON 22 grams 90% tungsten designed by Jonny

Gerwyn Price – RED DRAGON 24 grams 90% tungsten designed by Gerwyn



So how do you stand a chance of winning one of these fabulous prizes?

First, answer this simple question, the answer to which can be found on the first page of this issue of *DDN*:

IN WHAT YEAR DID DR. DARTS LAUNCH HIS *FIRST* WEBSITE?

Then, once you find the answer send it to me in an e-mail at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com **TOGETHER WITH** the single letter that appears on the subject line of my covering e-mail to this issue.

ENTRIES WITHOUT THAT LETTER WILL BE DECLARED VOID.

Finally, if you are hoping to win a specific set of signature darts please state his name on your entry. **HOWEVER**, by doing this you will exclude yourself from winning any of the other prizes.

CLOSING DATE FOR ENTRIES IS 20th DECEMBER 2019.

Lucky winners will be notified by 10th January 2020. **GOOD LUCK!**

MEMORIES OF JOCKY WILSON BY SCOTLAND'S FORMER NO. 1.



In the third instalment of stories recounted to freelance journalist Eddie Reid by Scotland's former No. 1. Rab Smith, Rab tells of travelling with Jocky overseas.

The Scotland team attended many tournaments overseas and one such event was in the USA. Scotland sent their regular threesome of Rab, Jocky and Angus [Ross], plus two reserves, Eddie McArthur and Tommy McLaughlin.

They all wanted to make the most of their adventure in the US and decided to hire a car. Rab could drive anything from cars, vans, tractors and even cranes. He was therefore more than happy to volunteer as driver of a Cadillac. They agreed to split the cost of hiring the car five ways, however Jocky said that he couldn't contribute. Rab asked him why not.

Jocky said, "I only brought 30 quid and I've spent most of that already."

Rab couldn't quite understand this and said, "You knew that you were coming on the trip of a lifetime to America and you decided to only bring 30 quid?"

Jocky said, "No Rab, I didn't 'decide' to bring 30 quid. That's all I have to my name. I brought everything I had."

His honesty touched everyone's heart and they split the cost of the hire-car four ways, rather than five. His team-mates also ensured that Jocky never ran out of beer during the trip.

Thanks to Eddie and Rab for yet another heart-warming story. There will be another of Rab's stories in the next issue.

LOFTUS DARTS

Denis Baker writes:

I found your name in a book I bought written by Jason Carter (How To Master The Game Of Cricket), in which you wrote the Foreword. In the Foreword you referred to yourself as a dart historian. [Denis: That's because I am.]

I was in the U.S. Navy stationed in Scotland 1988 thru 1991. While in Scotland my wife and I frequented many of the local auctions. At one of the auctions we bought a mystery box and in that box was a set of old darts that I have been trying to find information about.

The barrels of the darts appear to be heavy brass. The dart shaft are made of wood or bamboo and the dart flights appear to be paper. Printed on the flights are the following: W.R. Loftus, Games, Etc. London, W.1 and DART BOARDS. The dart case appears to be leather with a folder over flap and metal snap. Embossed on the case, under the flap, is W.R. LOFTUS, LTD. LONDON. W.1. Handwritten on the flap is the name P.A. (or V) SLATER.



I am curious as to how old this set of darts are and anything about W.R. LOFTUS and P.A. (V) Slater.

Although I know the names of numerous darts companies, Loftus was one that did not immediately spring to mind. I thought, chances are that this company did not make darts but rather bought them in from a light engineering company and put their brand on them via the leatherette (rather than actual leather). The handwritten name 'Slater' on the flap would have simply been the owner of the darts, having scribbled it there so his darts were easily recognisable and there was less risk of theft. The darts are brass with signs of oxidation.

But what of the company itself?

As always happens at times like these, when my brain and my archive fails me, I drop a note to Dr. Eddie Norman to see if he can lend a hand. Eddie replied:

Hi Patrick. I had a word with some friends in the Antique trade earlier today regarding W. R. Loftus as I knew I had heard of the firm and also sent a dart wallet with the name on.

It was indeed a great name in early scientific instruments and well known in the antique trade and their instruments sought after. They were also well known as pewterers making pewter mugs, planters and the like.

The firm was later involved in the wine trade and pub business; hence the possible connection to darts. I think as you rightly stated that the darts you have been shown were just some addition to the pub business they set up. As with many firms they were not a darts firm but had everything possible stamped with their name on.

I think the darts your reader has asked you about are of no great value except to anyone willing to buy them [as collector of Loftus-related memorabilia] and [they are] around 1960's judging by the flights and particularly the wooden shafts, both things sold on pub counters in the 1960's from a large confectionery jar.

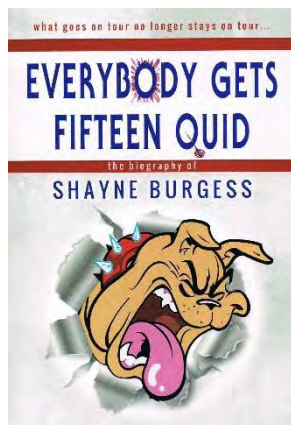
An advertisement on eBay for a Loftus tankard quoted the following from *Kelly's [Trade] Directory* for 1948:

London's leading bar fitters. Specialists in the construction of hotel bar counters, fitments and furniture. Manufacturers of beer engines, pewter-lined and teak sinks. All accessories for hotels, brewers, clubs, works canteens and the licensed trade.

What better way to advertise Loftus products than through the medium of darts and dartboards, promotional ideas that were extremely popular in the 1970s and 1980s especially involving the tobacco and brewery industries.

DARTS AUTO/BIOGRAPHIES

As an avid reader I am always on the lookout for new books about darts especially biographies of famous (and not so famous) darts players and so it was with great interest that I learned a few weeks ago of the publication of Shane Burgess's biography *Everyone Gets Fifteen Quid*.

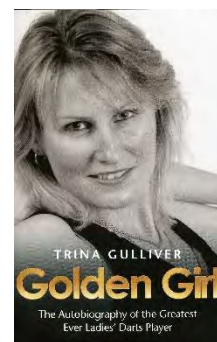


I must admit that I nearly stopped reading it after a few pages. The language used was very 'colourful' (perhaps too colourful for a sensitive soul like me) and I thought there was no need at all to call literary giant George Orwell a c***. But I persevered and completed the book and was glad that I did. It is a raw, 'in your face' personal exposé of life on the road in professional darts from someone who, although well known here in the UK, never rose to the status of a darts superstar.

I loved his players' view of being part of the British Darts Organisation (BDO) tournament trail (some super insights there) and his irritation at how, once he had joined the Professional Darts Corporation (PDC), there was little either he or anyone else could do about the juggernaut that was Phil Taylor. (At least Phil inspired him to buy a campervan!)

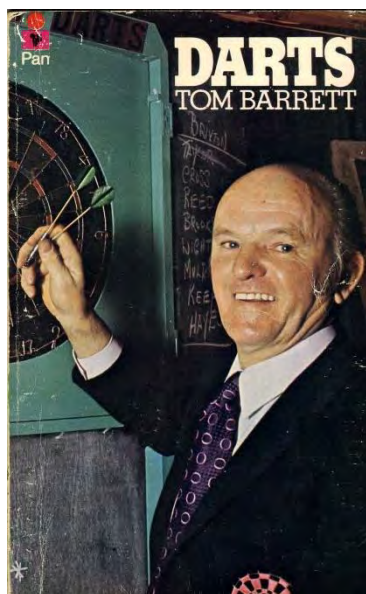
Shane's book made me think about biographies of top players that have been published in the past. (Modesty forbids me from mentioning my involvement with John Lowe's biography *Old Stoneface* (2005) and Trina Gulliver's *Golden Girl* (2008).) How far back could I go? Which player published the first darts players' biography/autobiography?

Surprisingly no one has recorded the life of any pre- or early post-war darts heroes. No biography exists of either Jim Pike or Joe Hitchcock, both legends of the game. East Anglian darts star George Caley published a book titled *How to Improve Your Darts* in 1950 which included a couple of



pages of biographical notes, mainly about his astonishing record, but the rest, as the title suggests, was instructional.

During the period 1950 until the early 1970s no biographies of darts players or indeed any darts books at all were published except for Noel E. Williamson's work simply titled *Darts* which appeared in 1968. Noel mentioned Joe and Jim but nothing biographical.



In fact darts fans had to wait until 1973 to read about the life of a top darts player and who better to kick things off - AT LAST! - than Tom Barrett the only man, up until then, to have won the prestigious *News of the World* title two years in succession and probably the best-known name in darts at that time.

Ghosted by journalist Harry Weaver and cleverly titled *Darts*, Tom's biography not only gave us a superb insight into his early life and subsequent life as a professional darts player but also provided readers with fascinating information about his travels around the globe, as an ambassador for Unicorn Products, how the first super leagues were formed, a brief history of the National Darts Association of Great Britain (NDAGB) and his predictions for the future.

Chapter 14, 'Where do we go from here?', began

'The most dynamic figure in British darts today is Olly Croft....He brings to darts the same energy and enthusiasm that made him a success in business. While the ordinary club secretary is concentrating, quite naturally, on next season's fixtures in his local league, Olly is thinking about an inter-city league covering the whole of Britain, and how he can go about arranging the first international between Britain and the United States.'

Shortly after Tom's book was published Olly (pictured right) and other colleagues, all of whom were involved with darts organisation in one way or another, launched the British Darts Organisation (BDO) and we all know what happened after that.

While numerous top professional darts players have published auto/biographies since then (including Eric Bristow (twice), Bobby George, Andy Fordham and Phil Taylor (twice)) no one from *inside* darts has ever had a go.



Back in 2011 I suggested to Olly Croft OBE that he should write a book about his life and indeed we spent hours together chatting about the BDO and all things darts. Subsequently, I spent a lot of time writing up my notes and preparing a synopsis which, once approved by Olly, was sent to potential publishers. We tentatively titled the book *The Godfather of Darts*.

Sadly, despite our synopsis being praised by a number of publishers, all of them stated that (Can you believe it?) the subject matter was too niche!

TOO NICHE!

It was there that, what should have been one of the most important (if not *the* most important) books ever written about darts and darts organisation, faltered and the project was shelved: turned down by the publishing world.

What a book that would have been! The history of darts through the eyes of the man responsible for dragging the game from the pub into the international arena. The *inside* story of the BDO from Day One in Olly's own words: from 'The Godfather's point of view...

So, as many of the original members of the BDO organisation fade into history, the sports historian, or anyone researching the development of darts from the 1960s onwards, will have to rely for their information on the fragments of experience reported via the oral testimony of darts players who were there (or thereabouts) during those formative years of the BDO which were reported in scattered national and provincial newspapers. Or by watching usually biased TV programmes produced following 'The Split' or, like Shane Burgess, players publishing their auto/biographies and record their experiences (as they remember them) for posterity.

So who is left to tell it like it really was?

Which darts player would you like to see write his or her auto/biography who hasn't already done so? Let me know at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com. (Images: PC Darts Archive)

AND FINALLY...

I am indebted to Bob Foster for sending me the following link from the Yorkshire Film Archive; a short advertisement for Vaux beer (at the time produced by the brewery in Sunderland) which features at the beginning the conclusion of a darts match

<http://www.yorkshirefilmarchive.com/film/vaux-commercial-windmill-cowgate>

A special piece of film, not only for the darts action but also because the *Cowgate* pub in Newcastle-upon-Tyne featured in the film was subsequently demolished.

MY RESEARCH IS SPONSORED BY



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