

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 121

April 2020



***DARTS WORLD* (IN PRINTED, MAGAZINE FORM) ENDS AFTER 48 YEARS**



It was with a sense of sadness that I learned in the February issue of *Darts World* magazine (#566) would no longer be published in paper, magazine form after 48 years. However, it *will* continue on-line.

It's probably my age but I've always liked to hold and read a magazine *in my hand* and not stare into a computer screen. I have a full run of the magazine from Issue No. 1. (December 1972/January 1973) and wrote occasional articles for *Darts World* and its sister publication *Darts Player* from 1985.

It was thanks to the then editor Tony Wood who was good enough to let me showcase my findings which eventually enabled me to research aspects of darts history and reach people 'in the know' that I couldn't have done in any other way.

Tony was a great support to me and when he sold the magazine in 2007 he invited me to his home as he had 'something you might be interested in.' The 'something' was his archive, hundreds of photographs, magazines (other than *Darts World*) and assorted ephemera that Tony had accumulated over three and a half decades. "Take what you want" said Tony. I took the lot – a whole carload!

It took me months to plough through it all, to catalogue hundreds if not thousands of photographs and to set up binders for darts magazines many of which I had never heard of before (such as *The Arrow* (Greater Atlanta Darts Association), *Dart Magazin* (Germany) and *Darts* (Finland) (pictured, right). Not the most original of titles for darts magazines but interesting all the same.



For me, *Darts World* was never the same after Tony Wood retired. However, I stayed with it and contributed several articles and then settled down in 2015 to write a regular column *The Last Word* every month, an article of historic relevance every month, on the last news page of the magazine.

Although sad to see *Darts World* cease as a printed magazine I was a little bit irritated that, having contributed to the magazine since 1985 and to the new regime since 2015, I had to find out about the cessation of publication *by reading the February issue*. I was not previously warned by the editor or any of his team beforehand. But that's life today I guess.

After careful consideration I decided that the February issue would be my last, *Last Word* and notified the editor. To date I have received no acknowledgement or any thanks for my contributions. Mind you the announcement in *Darts World* did say that 'Ongoing talks are taking place to ascertain the feasibility of producing printed subscription only versions and special editions.' That after 'the directors have decided, after long and painstaking discussion, to cease publication of the magazine.' 'Stable door' and 'bolted' spring to mind.

R.I.P. *Darts World* in printed form: the longest-running darts magazine *ever*.

CERI MORGAN (1947-2020)

The world of darts mourned yet another popular darter of the past with the death, on 29th February 2020, of Wales's Ceri Morgan. He was 72.



Ceri was born in Treorchy, Mid-Glamorgan on 22nd December 1947. Bearded and bespectacled he played his County darts for Glamorgan.

According to Derek Brown (author of *The Guinness Book of Darts*) Ceri took up the game during his lunch breaks when he was an apprenticed toolmaker and played for the *Red Cow* and the *Prince of Wales* in his home village. A Welsh international of long-standing, Ceri represented his country on 53 occasions.

His international career started well in 1974, with him winning all of his first three Home International matches. Ceri was later dropped but was back on top form in 1979 and reselected. That same year he was chosen by the selectors to represent Wales in the Nations Cup and the World Cup in Las Vegas. In the Nations Cup Wales came runner-up to England, the others in the Welsh team being Alan Evans and Leighton Rees. In Las Vegas Ceri was runner-up in the singles beaten in the final by USA's Nicky Virachkul. Ceri had beaten England's Tony Brown in his semi-final.

Ceri won the WINMAU Welsh Open in 1980. The venue was the Diamond Theatre Club, Caerphilly. Ceri defeated John Corfe (Clwyd) in the semi-finals and then beat Wales' Wayne Lock in straight sets (2-0, 2-0) in the final. His biggest pay-day came later that year, on 6th December, at the Forum Leisure Centre, Wythenshaw, Manchester when he won the Austin Morris British Masters. Ceri was one of eight top-ranked British 'seeds' who joined the competition in the second round of the tournament to take on the surviving eight regional finalists from the first round. *Darts World* reported

Morgan played consistently well throughout the finals, beating Bobby George in the final match by two sets to one and winning his games in 14, 17, 17, and 18 darts. Earlier Morgan had taken out Leighton Rees and John Lowe.

Ceri's prize was an Austin Princess saloon car valued at £5,500. Unfortunately Ceri did not drive but the sponsors were good enough to give him the option of cash.

The Welshman's best performance in the WINMAU World Masters came in 1982 when he reached the semi-finals only to fall at the last hurdle to Scotland's Jocky Wilson. Remember that back in those days all players started from a standing start: no seeds. In that year 132 champions from 25 countries participated in the Men's tournament so it was no mean feat for Ceri to make it so far.

As regards the world championships Ceri appeared in no less than eight Embassy World Darts Championship finals. In 1979, at Jollees Cabaret Club, Stoke-on-Trent, he beat Australia's Barry Atkinson 2-1 in the first round then lost to England's Tony Brown 2-1 in the second round. He returned the following year where he made the quarter finals where he lost 3-1 to Cliff Lazarenko. In 1981 he made it to the quarter finals for the first time where he was beaten 4-3 by England's John Lowe. In 1983 he returned to Jollees, losing in the first round to Belgium's Luc Marrell 2-0.

In 1984 he once again won through to the quarter finals where, once again, he met John Lowe and this time was whitewashed, 5-0. Undeterred Ceri was back in 1985 losing in the first round 2-1 to Northern Ireland's Steve Brennan and in 1986 a second round 3-2 defeat to England's Dave Whitcombe ended that campaign that year. Ceri's final appearance at the Embassy World Championships in 1987 saw him pitched against Scotland's Jocky Wilson in the first round at the new venue, the Lakeside Country Club, Frimley Green. Jocky won that encounter by three games to nil.

The other thing that many fans of darts back then will remember about Ceri is his unorthodox throwing action which Derek Brown in *The Guinness Book of Darts* (1980) described accurately as 'whipping the dart away without appearing to take a steady aim. The final photograph accompanying this article shows that, sometimes, even the camera could not cope with it!



A great career in darts for Ceri Morgan. A proud Welshman and the pride of Wales.

(Photos courtesy PC/DW Darts Archive. Used with permission.)

MvG SURPASSES PHIL TAYLOR'S NINE-DART RECORD

It was bound to happen and it was bound to be Michael van Gerwen.

At the PDC Players' Championship 6, MvG's record-breaking nine-darter against Cristo Reyes was his twenty-third televised nine-darter with back-to-back 180s and a 141 finish whilst 'sporting new [WINMAU] darts' thus surpassing 'The Power's previously held record of twenty-two. Michael hit another one at the Ladbrokes UK Open and clearly he hasn't finished yet. I'm personally looking forward to his thirtieth which, according to my calculations would be round about the World Championships in 2022 at the very latest. And talking of nine-darters...

NEWS OF THE WORLD – FIRST NINE-DARTER?

Nowadays our professional darters hit the perfect game with amazing regularity due to their natural skill. In fact, fans come to expect it at every match and often are rewarded by witnessing a nine-darter.

Back in the days of the *News of the World* I cannot recall a nine-darter ever being hit by anyone in the Grand Finals or in any round before that. That was until recently when I discovered what I believe to be the very first nine-darter to be recorded in that competition. I discovered a very short report in *Darts World* (December 1975) which read as follows:

A best-ever 9-dart finish for a game of 501 was recorded by Adrian Whitlock, Bridge Hotel, Treforest, Glamorgan in the News of the World event. His scores 180, 180, 141 game shot.

Given the date of publication of this report this was probably achieved at a House or Area level as the Divisional final would not be held until early the following year. However, further investigation raised some doubts about this achievement.

I have been unable to find a report in the *News of the World* during November and December 1975 recording this event. I understand that it would have taken place in the pre-Area Finals section of the tournament as the Area Finals in the 1970s took place in February each year. No trace can be found of Whitlock's name in the Area Finals programmes for East or West Glamorgan, so obviously his achievement did not lead to progress to that stage of the tournament. If anyone can help verify this nine-darter I'd like to hear from them.

THE 'PIZZA' DARTBOARD

Between issues #74 through to #78 (July to September 2016) and with the support of DDN subscribers I was able to piece together the history of the colourful dartboard advertising Hamlet – The Mild Cigar known to some as the 'Pizza Dartboard'. It transpired that the board was one of many advertising boards manufactured by the NODOR company. Legislation later meant that all such promotion of tobacco should cease in 2003.



At the time I had only photographs of the Hamlet promotional board plus a beer mat featuring a chubby darts player but, thanks to my wife Maureen, I have now secured an example of the board for my collection. We had travelled to the neighbouring county of Suffolk

to the village of Yoxford. There, in a huge antique centre, while I sorted through piles of postcards looking for images of pubs, Maureen found the board and actually treated me to it!

Chris L. from Coventry originally approached me in 2016 about his purchase of a Hamlet Mild Cigar dartboard. He stated that the date on the reverse was '15-7-91' suggesting that the board was about 25 years old. I was surprised to see that the same date was written on the back of my purchase, suggesting that that was the exact date on which these dartboards were manufactured. (How often can we tell *exactly* when a dartboard was made?) In addition my board bears the name 'R. Hughes' presumably the person responsible for the special run.



Then while searching through my dartboard images I found this version of the 'Pizza' dartboard that I found hanging on the wall at DB Darts in Clacton-on-Sea, Essex some years ago. It is a very similar board to the one mentioned above but in this case the advertisement is merely for 'HAMLET' and green segments instead of cream. (A 'vegetarian pizza perhaps?')

Do *you* collect dartboards advertising products (of any kind)? If so, what is the most unusual one you have? (It doesn't have to be tobacco advertising.) Send me a photograph and whatever detail you can provide and I'll publish the best in future issues of *DDN*.

COMPETITION WINNER

The response to the competition in #119 for the WINMAU dartboard signed by a number of players including MvG was amazing. The answer was (c) Adrenalin. Thanks to everyone who entered. My wife Maureen drew the lucky winner's name out of the 'hat' on 29th February. Congratulations to subscriber Neville Walker.

NEW ORGANISATION SET UP TO TAKE ON THE PDC AND THE BDO

News released on the first of the month has reached the *DDN* office that, following a number of high-level meetings of half a dozen miscellaneous and misinformed sports executives in



London last month, it has been announced that a brand new organisation has been set up to take on the might of the Professional Darts Corporation (PDC) and the not-mighty-at-all British Darts Organisation (BDO).

The newly-established National Croquet and Bridge Union (NCBU) intends to promote croquet (an ancient outdoor game played by posh folk where players try to hit largish balls through rather narrow hoops from a distance) during the summer and Bridge (a fairly complex card game played by even more posh folk during the winter). The Chairman of the NCBU, Bert Tremble, (pictured) told a gathering journalist outside the *Bell and Ballcock* pub, Beckton, east London:

“The idea is to promote our sports over the next twelve months to show that there is more fun to be had playing croquet out of doors in the sunshine during the summer and indoors playing Bridge during the winter months. We don’t care much for darts as it seems to be preferred by common people and those who like a drink or four every day.

As we are allied to the Temperance and Band of Hope Society (TBHS) it is our intention to spoil everyone’s fun as quickly and as efficiently and as soberly as we possibly can. We intend for our actions to have a great impact on people’s sporting preferences deflecting interest away from the juggernaut that is the PDC and handcart that is the BDO.”

International Darts Ambassador Flop O’Lair, told DDN

I can’t see this working. My committee and I will fight the NCBU with every breath we take, every move we make, every smile we fake. We’ll be watching them. We cannot see croquet drawing the huge crowds that darts does and surely the silence that is compulsory with bridge games would be something that those who enjoy singing “Stand up if you love the darts” and “Ooooooooooooooooooooooh! Michael van Gerwen” would not be able to transfer to bridge-watching audiences, unless of course it was restricted to the card-players’ walk-ons.

METAL DETECTING – DARTING DISCOVERIES

In last month’s issue I featured Chris Lovell’s discovery of a Jim Pike dart barrel on the beach at Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset. That made me think of a discovery made in a park near Cardiff, South Wales some years ago by a metal detectorist. I could not recall exactly when but I later discovered that I had reported on that story for *Darts World* magazine in September 2003.

Robert Nesbitt, from Barry, had gained permission from the local authorities to undertake detecting of Llandaff Fields, an area given to the people of Cardiff by Lord Bute and used by locals for football, cricket and rugby as well as joggers and dog walkers. Enthusiastic about his hobby Robert told me:



“I meet up with a friend on a Saturday to enjoy my hobby... You never know what you may find. Luck of the draw and the unknown factor is 90% of the reason for this hobby, you may not find anything (but that is unusual) There are plenty of ring pulls, bottle tops and crisp bags for everyone!”

On this particular occasion, Robert was detecting in the park in South Wales and when his detector registered a find, he scraped away the earth to reveal the *News of the World* medal shown in the accompanying photographs. The medal was in remarkable condition bearing in mind that it may well have been interred there for over 40 years. The inscription on the back of the medal read ‘Lancashire & Cheshire Divisional Runner Up 1961.’ Robert contacted me via my website and asked if I could possibly identify the owner.

It took a while but I eventually came up with the answer. The 1961 Lancashire and Cheshire Divisional Finals were held at the Town Hall, Bolton on 8th March 1961 and the final was

played between Ron Imber (Three Arrows Hotel, Congleton), the Crewe Area Champion, and Walter Loughran (Railway Hotel, Litherland), the Liverpool Area champion. Ron Imber triumphed so that meant that the medal Robert found belonged to Walter Loughran.

Robert regarded this find as one of his most significant to date

“[It’s] the one with the most human interest so far. Also the best one I think because of the recent personal history of the original and rightful owner of the medal. I should think Walter Loughran was devastated when he lost his medal. Walter owns the medal by right. He won it through a skill still practised today. It may have been misplaced for a while (42 years) but, as you see by its condition, it has stood the test of time.”

But what of Walter Loughran? It is a fair distance from Liverpool to Cardiff, so how did Walter’s prestigious darts medal end up in the ground in Llanduff Fields? Robert was keen to reunite the *News of the World* runner up with his medal. He said, “I was just lucky enough to find it for him. I would very much like to take it back to where it belongs, in Walter’s home.”

Back in September 2003 I challenged *Darts World* readers. I asked, “Do you know the whereabouts of this darter? Can we unite Walter (or his family) with his medal?” In all honesty I wasn’t expecting any response but that was not the case.

Jimmy McGovern, (pictured, below) the then Captain of the Merseyside County team, contacted me and said that Walter played his darts at the *King’s Vaults* pub, Garston and was ‘a very, very good darts player.’ Importantly Jimmy told me that, back in the early 1950s either Walter’s mother or sister lived ‘down Cardiff way and he visited regularly.’



That would certainly explain what he was doing in that country park but unfortunately not the full circumstances of *how* it was lost. That will never be known as, sadly, Jimmy did not know the whereabouts of Walter or if indeed he still lived. No one else responded to my plea. Nor could I find an image of Walter Loughran in my archive or elsewhere so if any *DDN* can help in this respect I’d be pleased to hear from you.

(Image of Jimmy McGovern © DW/PC Archive. Used with permission,)

THE ST. DUNSTAN’S FOUR – MEDAL DISCOVERY 2

Sarah N. e-mailed me a little while ago about a discovery made by her husband. She wrote

Hello Patrick. My husband found a St Dunstan’s darts medal [see image below] whilst metal detecting in Buckingham. I was wondering if you had any information about these medals. Were they won in competition? I have read about the blind darts team and was wondering if this was related to them? Any information you have would be greatly appreciated. Many thanks, Sarah.

I replied, *Hi Sarah...The St. Dunstan Four was a team of sighted darts players (not a blind team) formed just after the Second World War to raise funds for the charity St. Dunstan's which looked after and cared for the war-blinded.*

The team was led by one of the most famous post-war darts players, Joe Hitchcock, and toured the country throughout the 1940s. Joe ceased being the Captain in 1948 and the team disbanded in the early 1950s. The medal (which I think was silver) was given away as a reward for beating either the team or one of the St. Dunstan's Four in an individual match. The St. Dunstan's charity was renamed Blind Veterans a few years ago.

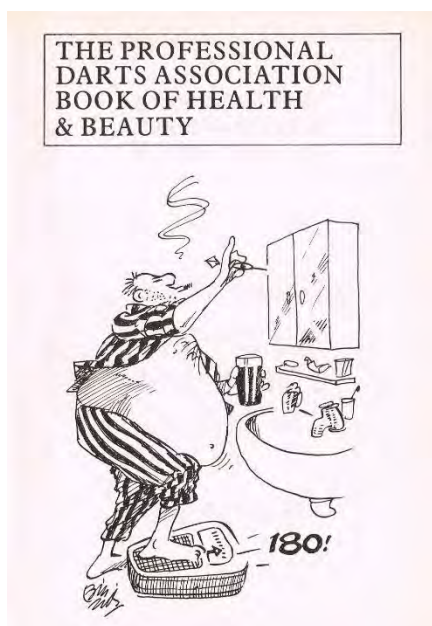
The medal your husband found is, as might be expected, a bit worse for wear so is of little value. The red enamel at the bottom of the medal which read 'DARTS' has, as far as I can see, disappeared. However, it is still an interesting piece.



I do have one of these medals in my collection but can't find it at the moment. When I do I'll take a snap of it and include it in a future *DDN*.

THE WORLD'S SHORTEST BOOKS...AND DARTS

Apart from books on darts and/or pubs I occasionally buy humorous works. One recent example is *The World's Shortest Books from David Frost on Sunday* (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1987.) The book was illustrated by a number of well-known cartoonists including Mel Calman, Michael Heath, Bill Tidy and William Ruston and, surprisingly, featured two of the shortest (and of course fictitious) books about darts.



The first was '*Teeth Care* by Jocky Wilson', a whimsical reference to Jocky having recently paid out for dental work resulting in his having a full set of new teeth/dentures. The second was '*The Professional Darts Association Book of Health and Beauty* eloquently pictured here by Bill Tidy.

Given that the sport of darts was in a state of flux in the mid-1980s, it is not surprising that the general representation of a darts player should be the obese, beer-swilling, cigarette-smoking, lump of humanity so popular with the press back then and, unfortunately *still* today. (It is interesting to note that this cartoon was drawn *after* the setting up of the Professional Darts Players' Association (PDPA) and before the Professional Darts Corporation (PDC).)

Of course, there is no humour to be made of the svelte, smart, sober, professional darts player of today but whilst chubby dart players still exist, as they surely do but in ever-decreasing numbers, the game will remain susceptible to such ribald and in my view unnecessary and unwarranted humour.

RAB SMITH'S DARTS

I trust you have all enjoyed Rab Smith's memories of Jocky Wilson published in *DDN* over recent months. Feedback has been very positive. There's still a lot of love out there for Jocky and, indeed, fans still remember Rab with affection. Peter Finch wrote

Dear Sir, I wondered if you know what darts Rab Smith used. I was a fan of his. I used his red flame flights but never knew what make of darts they were except they were 21 grams. Thanks as I've wondered this for forty years. Thanks.

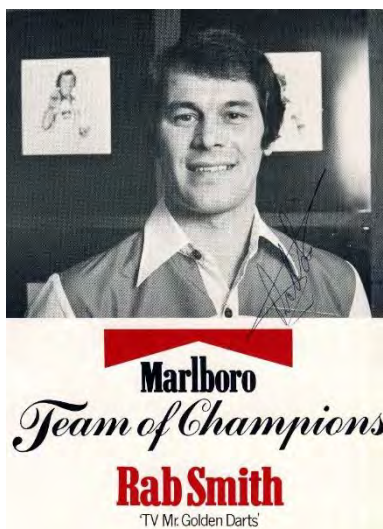
My initial reply to Peter read as follows:

Peter. That's an interesting question to ask after 40 years! I hope you haven't been having sleepless nights over this! I interviewed Rab some years ago and he told me that he played with 21 gm darts yet the company who made his signature darts back in the late 1970s/early 1980s (Milbro of Motherwell) produced them in three different weights: 20gms, 24gms and 28 gms!



Who better to contact about this than the man himself, Scotland's former #1 Rab Smith himself? Rab replied via his good friend Eddie Reid as follows:

"Milbro", was a company based in Motherwell, Scotland and they were contracted to make Rab's darts, to his own design, in the early part of his professional career. Those darts were 20gm copper-tungsten, which ties in perfectly with your research. [The photo above, right, shows Rab signing his contract with Milbro executive Douglas Rae looking on. Below, Milbro advert for Rab's darts. (Images: PC Darts Archive.)



However, Rab felt that his game would benefit from a very slightly heavier dart. He shared this with his friend, Tony Green [darts commentator and referee] and it was Tony who had Rab's 21gm darts custom-made for him, again to Rab's specifications. Rab doesn't know who Tony approached with regard to the manufacture of those 21gm darts, however I am sure that Mr Green could provide you with that final piece of information. Rab was delighted with his 21gm darts and they became synonymous with Rab's continued success. He says that he hit more maximums with those darts that he did with any other set of darts. There is however a twist in the tale!

During one competition, the point broke off of one of those darts and it broke off exactly at the bottom edge of the barrel. Rather than discard the whole set, Rab insisted on having the broken dart re-pointed. In order to remove the portion of the point which was embedded, a

miniscule amount of the barrel had to be trimmed away, simply so the broken point could be gripped in order to remove it.

The repair was completed successfully. In order to maintain an even weight in each dart, an identical amount of the other two barrels was also removed. Rab still has that set of darts and he showed them to me this afternoon. He is very sentimental about them, however they no longer weigh exactly 21gms - but just a whisker under that! If you are speaking to Tony Green in the near future, please give him Rab's best wishes and indeed mine. [Unfortunately, I don't know how to contact Tony...yet.]

‘GANG OF SIXTEEN’ – FEEDBACK

Thanks to subscriber Mike Bennett who contacted me about the sixteen so-called rebels who broke away from the BDO in the early 90s to form the World Darts Council (WDC) (later becoming the PDC. Mike told me that darts player Matthew Edgar had produced a ‘Where are they now?’-type video on YouTube relating to the ‘rebels’, Mike saying “Perhaps he's been reading your newsletter!”

Indeed, since contacting me I see that Matthew has produced a second video. They can be found at these links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAiel83mX54>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AkNhlds654Q>

Both videos make fascinating watching and Matthew is to be congratulated. I was particularly pleased that Matthew managed to track down the whereabouts of Wales’ Chris Johns.

APOLOGIES

I apologise for the non-story that appeared in this issue but hope you enjoyed it anyway. I simply cannot resist a bit of April tomFoolery...

MY RESEARCH IS SPONSORED BY

WINMAU®
T H E F O R C E B E H I N D D A R T S™

NOTE: Text © 2020 Patrick Chaplin or as shown. Images © Patrick Chaplin or as stated or sourced. Neither text nor images can be reproduced without prior permission of the copyright holder(s).