

# DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 122

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## LOCKDOWN!

I do hope that you are all well and dealing with the global lockdown caused by COVID-19 as best you can. I also sincerely hope that you and your families and friends are OK.



The photograph (left) was taken before the coronavirus struck but even so gives you some idea of what I am doing to during the lockdown. Of course I spend time with my wife Maureen, especially out in the garden if the weather allows.

One personal benefit of the impact of COVID-19 is that I have been able to allocate time to restart writing my latest and very last darts book. It has the working title *The Sport of Pints – The People's History of Darts*; a project that had to be abandoned in 2017 when my father died and again in 2019 when Maureen suffered a stroke. Back in the autumn of 2017 I was just about to sign a book deal with a London publisher which

obviously had to be put on the back burner. The publisher was very understanding and I hope that, when I go back to him, we can still discuss publication.

As you can see from the photograph I do have a WINMAU BLADE 5 dartboard in my 'office' so I can throw a few arrows as the mood takes me. That brings me to...

### BORED AT HOME? - BOARD AT HOME!

Over recent weeks, wherever we are, we have all had to adjust to the impact of COVID-19 has had on our lives. Most of us, except frontline staff, are in lockdown and doing what our Governments tell us to do in order to protect our health services and save lives.

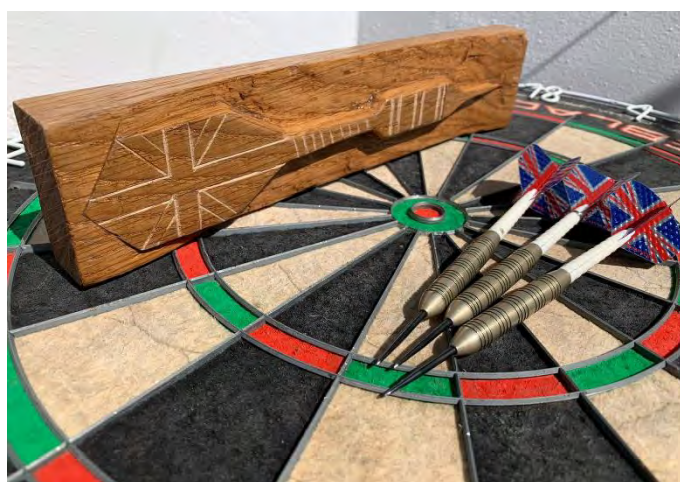
Remember the mid-1980s anyone? A time when the latest in gaming software was the Mastertronic '180'? You simply slipped the cassette into your Commodore 64 computer, waited ages for it to upload, and then PLAY! How times have moved on since 1986! So much more to do indoors.



Technology has rushed forward over the past two and a half decades and now we can watch our darts heroes taking part in head-to-head matches, view the PDC Home Tour or play darts against friends from the safety of your own home(s) using one or more of the fabulous apps that are available.

But, as we all know, there is nothing – *Nothing* – like the real thing.

As time goes on, more and more of us will be looking for something fascinating to do; something to keep our minds active, encourage us to move about a bit and even to learn from the experience. As all *DDN* readers will know darts does all of those things and it is eminently suitable for lockdown.



Subscriber Bill Bell is already playing darts against his friends via the Zoom app on his phone. He's called it 'Lockdown Darts' and it's all going very well with a league organised between him and his friends, playing mostly 501-up. Bill told me "One of my friends, Ollie Armfield, has carved the trophy from some mahogany he had at home. Here's a pic of it so far!"

Looks good Bill! Let me know who wins the Lockdown League.

Thousands of families and individuals are already playing darts at home as one of the best antidotes to the gloom generated by COVID-19 while many more are discovering the game for the very first time. This has been demonstrated by the number of orders being placed for darts and darts equipment throughout the industry. Put simply, more people than ever are now playing darts at home and, although the mechanics of operating within the darts business has had to change, companies are still receiving and processing orders.

Again, as we all know, darts is, relatively speaking, an inexpensive game to play. There are even dartboards and darts for children made of Velcro ® or are magnetic to ensure it's safe to play. For those who want to take the game more seriously there are the top quality bristle boards. Of course all BLADE 5 dartboards (the BLADE 5 Dual Core is shown here) come supplied with fitting and playing instructions so it only takes a very short while before "GAME ON!"

As long as the space is sufficient for folks to ensure social distancing you can play till your heart's content then pack the darts away safely and move back on to the sofa or back to work.



So, there is. There should be no reason why darts shouldn't be part of *everyone's* lockdown activities. There is no need to be *bored at home* when you can have a **board at home!**

Keep safe and well everyone!

## JIM PIKE AND JOE HITCHCOCK

As I mentioned above, I am currently writing my latest book *The Sport of Pints...* I already have a 60-page chapter on the Second World War which was originally part of my PhD



research but was deleted as the word count had already exceeded that permitted for my dissertation. That is now subject to revision.

The actual chapter I am concentrating on at the moment has the working title *From the Ashes – Post-war darts 1945-1953*. The period is specific as it covers the immediate post-war period (what remained of 1945) to the year before the establishment of the

National Darts Association of Great Britain (NDAGB) which, from 1954 until the early 1970s, was the governing body of the game.

Part of the chapter will concentrate on the two best-known stars of the period, Jim Pike and Joe Hitchcock (both pictured here; Jim above left, Joe, right). Having secured most of the information I need about these top players from research spanning many years I am able to work from the material I hold in my archive. However, I am now looking for people's memories of playing either Jim or Joe or stories that may well have been imparted to them by their parents or grandparents.



Given that Jim died in 1960 and Joe in 1981, I appreciate that I am pushing my luck a bit. However, if you can help with this I would appreciate you contacting me at [patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com](mailto:patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com).

## DARTBOARDS MADE FROM CAMEL HAIR – I DON'T THINK SO

NO! NO! NO!

I am grateful to Paul Seigel (aka the famous 'DARTOID') for bringing my attention to a sale on eBay of a 'handmade, camel hair dartboard' for which the seller wanted \$1,500!!!

It was in fact on old NODOR bristle dartboard, probably late 40s or early 50s, but *no way* was it made of camel hair, nor was it 'handmade' as these dartboards were always constructed in the factory but, OK, with a little bit of handling by the machinist as he/she compressed the biscuits of sisal into place to form the dartboard.

Never, never, never were dartboards made of camel hair (although I did hear tell that someone who worked for NODOR in the 1980s when recalling his time there to the owner of the company said “I used to move the bins with the camel hair in.”

What?!?!?

Nor were dartboards ever made from horsehair or pig bristle. Gum. Compressed and coiled paper. Cork. Yes, but NEVER, NEVER NEVER camel hair, horsehair or pig bristle.

## WELCOME TO OUR FRIENDS IN SRI LANKA



A very warm welcome to Avishka Lakmal and all his friends in darts in Sri Lanka. Aviska recently wrote to me as follows:

*Ayubowan Patrick, (Hello) Sir,*

*My name is Avishka Lakmal and I live in Avissawella in Sri Lanka where I own a rickshaw company*

*and also teach English lessons not Sringlish (Indian English) but British English.*

*I am writing to you to thank you for my receiving your Doctor Darts News Magazine for the last three years which has been sent to me by Eddie Norman, who you may know. Today your April edition arrived safely from him.*

*Three years ago Eddie came to Sri Lanka with his ‘Sage of World Darts Lecture tour’. He stopped for two nights. Of all the legacies of the British Colonial period the game of cricket is probably held dearest by the average Sri Lankan. Darts was never heard of, nevertheless an audience of sixty people turned up to listen to Eddie speak; many I think out of curiosity to see what Darts was about.*

*Eddie is an incredible lecturer and at the end of the evening he had so many questions being asked the evening seemed to never end. Eddie left us six Nodor dartboards and several sets of darts, all of which are now situated in various public houses in Colombo and other sites. The game is never going to be huge here in Sri Lanka but we have imported further dartboards and supplies and we hope to eventually have a league organised. Tourists as well as Sri Lankan people are now playing the game here.*

*In October last Eddie returned to see us again for a darts lecture on his way to the Maldives. He arrived on the Deepavali holiday, the Hindu Festival of Lights, with the lighting of lights in Tamil households: this is symbolic of the good over evil. This time over 200 enthusiasts turned up to hear him speak and as before Eddie donated all monies raised to a local children’s charity. Eddie promised to send us a further four Nodor dartboards to help me promote Darts here and these duly arrived in February.*

A local newspaper praised Eddie and judged the tour to be ‘a great success’.

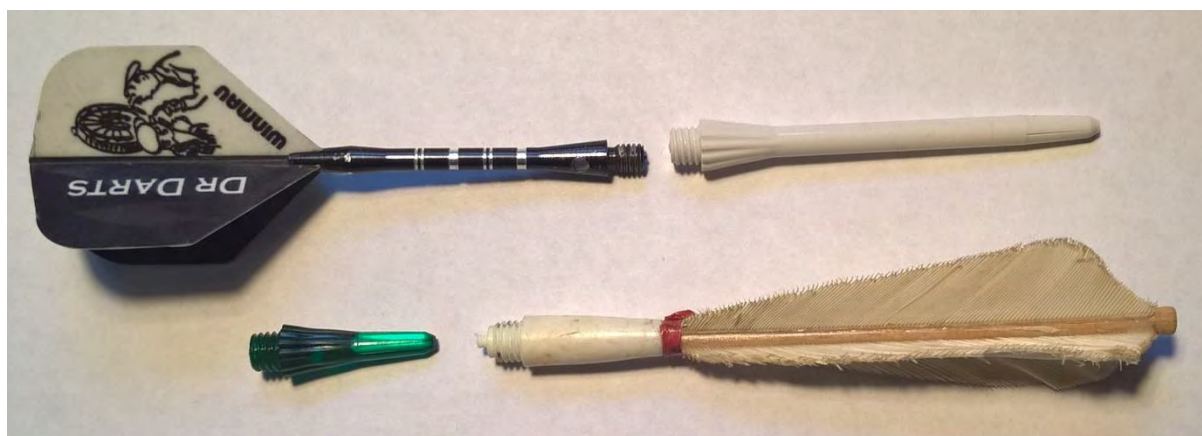
My thanks to Avishka for formally subscribing to *DDN*. I am sure that all readers will find this an amazing story whereby the (now retired) 'Sage of World Darts' has succeeded, yet again, to promote and establish darts playing in areas that might not otherwise been introduced to our sport.

I am sure we all wish Avishka well in his attempt to establish a formal league in his area and look forward to receiving news from him about any progress made.

## QUARTER-INCH SHAFTS

Like everyone else on the planet, subscriber Jerry Feather is a little bit fed up with COVID-19. He told me recently

*Hi Patrick! This Covid virus is the \*\*\*\*\*! ... I sure have been getting lots of my old darts stuff organized, 45 years of collecting and it only means something to me & a few others. BE SAFE!!!...A couple Dart items I found: dozens of feather flights still in plastic & 1/4 in. various shafts. It been a long time since anyone made darts with 1/4 in threads.*



It has indeed Jerry. Feather flights and quarter-inch shafts were commonplace in the 1950s and 1960s right up to the mid-1970s but are rarely seen today. They were more associated with the bulky brass darts back then. The three examples (comparing with the modern stem) are from my collection.

## FEEDBACK – CERI MORGAN

I am so pleased that the obituary I wrote concerning Welsh darts star Ceri Morgan was of interest to readers. Brian H. wrote:

*Great obituary for Ceri Morgan: Always there or thereabouts in his heyday with his very distinctive throw.*

Subscriber Bill Bell recalled

*I saw Bobby George talking about Ceri Morgan once. He said that his throw would put him off. Said he threw darts like he was throwing a grenade! 😊*

Chris Murray wrote:

*Great shame to hear about the passing of Ceri Morgan. I too was fascinated by his throwing action as you alluded to - how did that work?*

How indeed!

## **MEMORIES OF DARTS WORLD**

Learning of the demise of the paper version of *Darts World* magazine, former contributor Wayne Baker wrote to me saying

*Thanks for another great DDN - most welcome during the current situation. I too, was upset to hear the news of the closure of Darts World (paper version), having worked with the mag for more than three decades.*

*I started freelancing for the magazine during the mid-1970s and launched the 'People Profile' series and then later the 'People' column. Tony (Wood) [Editor of the magazine] sent me to many top tournaments - including the 1980 Embassy world championship at Jollees. I also went to early WDC (which became the PDC) events including several world championships at the Circus Tavern. I also ghost wrote columns for Phil Taylor and Trina Gulliver. Tony also entrusted me to provide most of the features each year for the annual Darts Player magazine.*



*For me Darts World died when Tony called "game shot" on the editorship of the magazine and took on a well-earned retirement. With my impending retirement, I'm sure many hours will be spent leafing through back copies of DW.*

*Keep up the good work Patrick. We'll have to meet up for a pint and chatter when we can leave our homes.*

Let's hope we can Wayne. We haven't met for years; the last time was probably at Lakeside back in the day. (*Darts World* is still available online.)

During our email exchange Wayne and I discussed reproducing some of his excellent 'People Profile' articles in *DDN*. So watch this space for the first one, a profile of Australian darts ace Terry O'Dea which will be published soon.

## **PROBLEMS RECEIVING DDN?**

While providing feedback on last month's issue, Brian H. told me that, for whatever reason, he did not receive issue #120. I duly sent a copy to Brian but that also made me think that there may be other subscribers who missed that, or perhaps another, issue.

I do my best to ensure that the mailings are made in an efficient and private way and accept that occasional glitches do occur. So, please, if over recent months you have missed an issue, let me know and I will send it to you.

Please also remember that *DDN* is always issued before the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month so if yours hasn't arrived by then, contact me at my usual email address.

## KEN BROWN

Ken Brown was a very well-known darts player here in the UK during the first wave of the modern era from the late 1970s. He played for England on numerous occasions and had a regular column in *Darts World* magazine for many years. He is also the father of Steve Brown ('The Original') who, as you may well know, has lived in the USA and played his darts there very successfully for decades.



Whilst going through my vast collection of darts photographs (something else to occupy me while COVID-19 keeps me at home), I came across this photograph of Ken receiving a trophy *and* what appears to me to be a set of chess pieces for winning (or in celebration of) something.

Over the years I have seen many different items presented as prizes in both local, provincial and national tournaments ranging from holidays, kettles, stereos, packs of beer, a box of eggs, canteens of cutlery, meat, fruit and vegetables, but never a chess set. (I'm assuming that's what it is.)

Having not been in contact with Steve Brown for some time and mislaid his contact details, I am hoping that he still receives *DDN* and therefore will be able to solve this for me. If not then there may be someone else who sees the photo and recognises the event or can contact Steve on my behalf. If so, please contact me at [patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com](mailto:patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com).

## SOMETHING TO DURING LOCKDOWN

Chris Murray is a good friend of mine; a fellow pub historian and is on the Committee of the Pub History Society of which I am currently Chairman. ([www.pubhistorysociety.co.uk](http://www.pubhistorysociety.co.uk))

Chris, like me, is a collector of all things 'pub'. He recently sent me this darts-themed beer mat that was issued in the 1980s by the Greene, King brewery here in the UK advertising their Abbot Ale.

I was wondering if readers would like to have a go at completing this limerick and sending your ideas to me. The original prize was three pints of Abbot Ale but I can't afford that, so what say I send five sets of my exclusive WINMAU Rhino long life 'DR. DARTS' flights to the best answer received? Send your idea to [patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com](mailto:patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com).



## AND FINALLY

Brian H. has been mentioned a couple of times in this issue so here's a third. He told me

*Once again, thanks for a great monthly read; needed more than ever in these dark times!  
Thanks again & keep us self isolators going with your monthly lifeline!*

It is my pleasure to contribute in some small way to help you all surviving the lockdown.

## MY RESEARCH IS SPONSORED BY

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**KEEP SAFE AND WELL**