

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

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JOHN ZIMNAWODA – MYSTERY (SADLY) SOLVED

DDN readers may recall that in issue #110 (May 2019) I ran a story about the US darts ace, John Zimnawoda of Baltimore (pictured below), a 33-year old carpenter who won the United



States Open Darts Championship in 1978 and thus qualified to visit London as his country's representative at the 1978 *News of the World* International Championship.

At the end of that article I wrote "That's really where my research into John Zimnawoda seems to end" and appealed to my US

readers for more information. Sadly, I heard nothing so assumed that was that and that John had retired from the game. Later in 2019 I transferred the article to my website.

Imagine my surprise when, recently, I received feedback from Tammy Sprinkle who wrote

"John Zimnawoda was my dad. So crazy that I'm seeing this on September 13th. Today is not only my dad's birthday but also the day he died. He was killed on the first day of his new job at Bethlehem steel on his birthday in 1979 when I was 13 and my brother had just turned one on August 30th.

This not only changed my life but my family's life forever. I remember when my dad won and we went to England for the world title. He never got to defend his title because he died.

I'm always freaked out by the day but this year when I saw your article about him and it was on that day it brought me peace. Thanks so much for giving me a wonderful memory."

Things like this make my work worthwhile.

This was certainly not the response I was expecting. Obviously, I was very sad to learn of John's passing. I am extremely grateful to Tammy for allowing me to retain her comments on my website and to permit me to reproduce them here.

BRASS DARTS

The article relating to 'tungsten v brass' in the September issue certainly generated responses from readers as seen in the October DDN. Glen Huff from Seattle wrote

I started with Brass darts...sadly no longer have the first set I bought. ..must've traded them decades ago for something else. They were 26 gram and 1/4 BSF threaded. Think they were DYNO darts...not sure if they were USA or UK.

[Does the photo below bring back memories Glen?] [Image of DYNO darts © Ebay seller]

Then I later bought some brass darts via postal mail from Dr. Eddie Norman via his and [his brother] Peter's "The House of Darts" [in Bristol, UK]. The darts are 21 grams and I still have them and still use them often. There's something nice about the feel of brass darts especially when they warm up with use. As far as my poor darting abilities go I think I throw just as well with brass darts as tungsten, and if I'd stuck to brass I'd probably have saved myself a lot of \$\$\$ over the decades, but collecting sets has been a fun hobby.



NAIL-THROWING – FEEDBACK

Whilst writing to me about brass darts Glen Huff added

I recall reading your article on W.A.N.T [World Association of Nail Throwers] probably in 1985 when I first began subscribing to Darts World magazine...the then Editor, Tony Wood kindly sent me your postal address when I wrote him and told him I enjoyed your article. Thus, our friendship began dear friend !! :-) [Glen: Was that really 35 years ago?]

Back around late 1980s, I corresponded via postal letter with Mike Brown who was then the Secretary of the W.A.N.T. He sent me typewritten letters on the old W.A.N.T. letterhead paper, and he kindly sent me a set of sharpened throwing nails that he himself had used, which he originally got from Joe Hitchcock.

He instructed me in the letter how to throw them and all these decades later I think I only got one nail to ever stick in the board, and it was nowhere close to my intended target. I still have the letters Mike Brown sent me somewhere in one or the other of my filing cabinets, and still have the nails he sent me somewhere in the various boxes of darts sets in my collection. No idea which box...

I did get to meet our mutual friend Cyril Pearce [a UK darts player and nail-thrower of Pontywaun, Wales] in Las Vegas probably 20 years ago. He had his darts sets with him as well as his sets of throwing nails. He was equally accurate with nails as with darts. He could pull the flights off of anyone's set of darts and throw them and hit his intended target without any flights in the darts and could have nails land right by the darts...phenomenal talent... His throwing nails had a dart point inserted in the front of the nail and a bit of clear glue or epoxy to help hold the dart point in the nail. He gave me a set of his throwing nails with the dart points in the nail, and again I still have them somewhere in my boxes of darts sets...somewhere...Ha Ha!

Cyril's nails were as described by Glen. The photo, right, shows the nails and pouch given to me by Cyril back in the early 2000s. The examples here measure just over four inches including the point.



Also, I think any serious collector of darts memorabilia can all relate to Glen's 'boxes... somewhere' comment, can't we? Many years of collecting naturally means many boxes and filing cabinets and the impossible task of displaying or recording every item... something I have tried to do over the years but only ever succeeded with darts photographs and biographical notes.

Mick Simpson wrote

Great to hear about other nail throwers. You only normally hear about people like Joe Hitchcock. Greatest Exhibition? Well that will start a conversation I'm sure!

For me Camber Sands, summer of 1977 /78 [when I] watched the great players Tom Barrett and Bill Duddy take on plenty of players. [They] threw nails and even threw drawing pins. Fantastic to watch.

Drawing pins! Just normal drawing pins. I wondered *how* they were able to throw such a small pointed object let alone throw it *accurately*. Mick explained

You hold the pin between your thumb and middle finger with the head of pin facing you then throw the pin and, as you let it go, twist it. Tom Barrett scored one throw of 140 from the then standard length of 8 feet. Great to see but not easy to do.

I've tried and failed miserably. (I am equally as miserable with nails.) If you know the secret please contact me at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

THE CIRENCESTER DARTBOARD

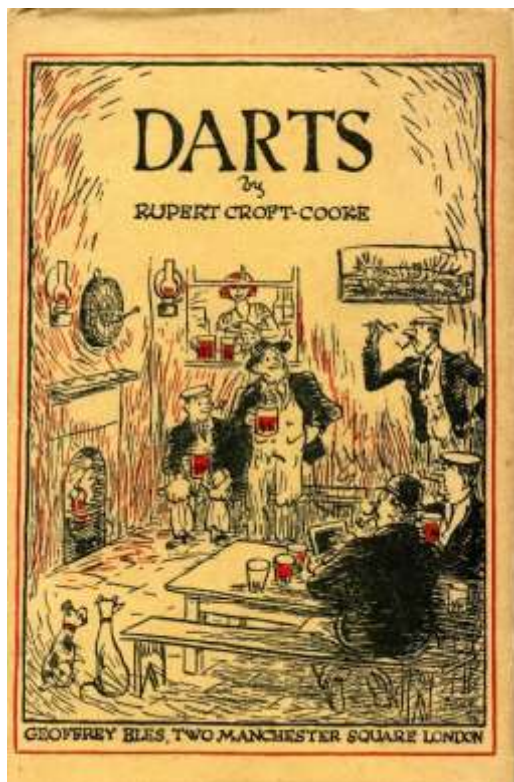
From Sweden, Erik Vennevold contacted me recently via my website enquiring about an unusual dartboard. He wrote

Hello Patrick. I am a Swedish dart player who also got stuck on the history of darts and among everything else I particularly got interested in the variety of dart boards and its origin. I have assembled pictures and the history of most of the existing dart boards but one: the "Gloucester" dart board.

From what I've heard it's a London board with segments twice the normal size, and it originates from Cirencester, but since I haven't managed to find a picture of it. I don't know if it's the same as a Narrow Five/London 5 board with just a local name or if it's a different board on its own merits.

I was hoping you maybe could provide me with an answer to that...?

The board Erik referred to is one of the few regional dartboards not mentioned on my website, something I must correct at some stage.



The only reference I have ever found to this dartboard is in the very first book ever published totally on darts written by Rupert Croft-Cooke in 1936. (Front cover image above.) The book was written at a time when Croft-Cooke was living in that County.

He described Gloucestershire as 'a good county for darts' and described the board as follows:

'In construction it is on similar lines to the familiar treble board of the home counties, but it is almost twice as large. The spaces round the rim on which doubles are scored measure quite half an inch across, and the trebles are as wide...From considerable experience I can tell you that the width of the doubles, for some occult reason, does not make them any easier to pierce...How often have I seen the confidence of practised players exploded on one of these boards....They are made, I am told, exclusively in Cirencester, and it is in the bars about that pleasant town that you will find them '

As far as I can tell it was never actually called the 'Gloucestershire Board' or indeed the 'Cirencester Board'. I can only assume that the board was made on demand for licensees who were looking to entertain both the locals and, especially visitors. Croft-Cooke added

A lorry from London or Cardiff draws up at the Puesdown Inn, for instance, a cosy little bar on the main road where a player is sure to get a game. The driver and his mate come into the public bar, and dispose of their pints with some gusto. Then they see the board, and if this their first visit, exclaim, "Call that a dartboard?" ... "It's too easy," continues the newcomer. "Why those doubles are as wide as our singles!"

Still, since we have heard all this before, we remain stolid and speechless, so that our visitor takes us for so many clods.

"I could put three darts in any of those doubles any time," he continues, "Anyone like to see me?"

Then one of us, it doesn't matter which, after admitting modestly that he can't really play, accepts the newcomers challenge, and the game begins. The result is a forgone conclusion. These Gloucestershire boards may be easier or harder than the normal type, but they are certainly not easy for anyone who is not used to them.

Thus the 'Gloucestershire Board' was nothing more than an enlarged version of the standard board and yes, if you hadn't seen it before, it might have had you fooled.

Erik has a fascinating collection of dartboards and their history and you can check it out at <http://lagambadart.se/slipgrip/index.html>. Erik's website is in Swedish but I guess translation software is available if not already present in readers' computers.

THE PUESDOWN INN

When Rupert Croft-Cooke compiled his book *Darts* in the late 1930s he lived within a short distance of the *Puesdown Inn* and drank and played darts there regularly. The pub was a former coaching inn on the A40 in Gloucestershire at Compton Abdale, here in the UK and Croft-Cooke spent many a happy hour there. It was in this pub that Croft-Cooke first spotted what he dubbed 'the Gloucestershire Board'.

My wife Maureen holidayed in Gloucestershire in the late 1990s and sought out the pub.

At the time of our visit it was no longer 'a cosy little bar' but a large trying-to-be gastro-pub. However, at that time, the dartboard was still there. If you look at this photo of me with darts in hand and then at the cover of Croft-Cooke's book on the previous page, you will see it is one and the same space although the serving hatch of the late 1930s had been replaced by a window.



How strange to have been able to throw a dart where the author of *Darts* had stood over seven decades before perhaps even sitting nearby watching the locals play and taking notes for his future, ground-breaking, book.

Sad to report that, on a subsequent visit about a decade later, the oche, dartboard, window and wall had been removed and the whole place turned into a 'proper' gastro-pub. In 2018 this historic Grade II listed public house was put up for auction with an asking price of £600,000. As far as I can tell *The Puesdown Inn* is no longer a pub.

DR. DARTS' TV APPEARANCE SCUPPERED BY COVID-19

In mid-September I was approached by Boundless Productions, the company which produces the ever-popular TV series *Great Railway Journeys of Britain* here in the UK, asking if I would appear on the programme; to be interviewed by the 'star' of the series, former Member of Parliament, Michael Portillo. They were interested in including a segment on darts based in London.

I eagerly accepted and provided information (never before published) relating to *The Boot Inn* in Cromer Street, London. This pub, conveniently situated a few hundred yards from

King's Cross/St. Pancras railway station, was the Headquarters of the National Darts Association (NDA) in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The NDA was formed in 1925 by representatives of the licensed trade, brewers, darts organisers and the *Morning Advertiser* (the licensed trade newspaper) in the latter's offices in Fleet Street, London. This was the first-ever organisation established to control the game on a national basis.



One of the key committee men in there from the start was Charles W. Garner. He was appointed Honorary Secretary and, at the time, was licensee of *The Boot Inn*. Rule books issued by the NDA indicated that *The Boot Inn* was the Association's Headquarters. It would have been during Garner's time at *The Boot Inn* that, in the mid-1920s

arrangements were made for the inaugural running of the *News of the World* darts 'test' in the London Metropolitan Area to decide who was the best darts player in the capital.

The Boot Inn was to be the venue for the filming and my interview but it was not to be. Having *filled* in a medical form for the company *at the very last moment* the Producer rang me to say that I was "too much of a risk" (I am diabetic and over 70 (just)) and thus they could not go ahead. Sadly, but clearly, I had to accept their decision.

But it did go ahead with me being replaced by Simon Inglis, a good friend from back in the days when we worked with Arthur R. Taylor on his masterwork *Played at the Pub*. In fact, when contacted by that same Producer, Simon told her that I was by far the best person to talk to anyone about darts history but she explained the position to him. I know this was the case because Simon rang me to ask me a few questions minutes before the filming. So, contrary to what the Producer told me, it *did* go ahead.

Clearly I was very disappointed not to have been directly involved but was very happy that Simon was able to take my place. News of the World

WINMAU AND DARTS WORLD: BACK TO THE FUTURE

Darts World's renaissance continues with the announcement of its first ever digital support partnership with WINMAU.

Following the takeover early this year, *Darts World* has progressed the modernisation of the way darts content is delivered by building a world class team and connecting its expertise in darts media, data and talent.

This includes the industry's most forward-thinking contributors and journalists, who share WINMAU's unmatched passion for the sport.

Simon Hall, Head of Marketing at WINMAU said

“This new partnership is very different from the old traditional advertising model as it allows us access to the most exciting up-and-coming media channels and initiatives in the darts community. Both our organisations go back many moons as WINMAU’s rich heritage is 70+ years in the making, whilst *Darts World* launched the sport’s first magazine in 1972. So it’s really exciting to be working with them weekly on our interactive strategy”.

Darts World’s 2020 revival has seen them acquire Darts Database, one of the most popular and iconic statistics websites in darts and one which is now undergoing an exciting overhaul led by darts’ top statistician: Christopher Kempf (aka “Ochepedia”). The group added yet another string to its bow by taking the new kid on the block of darts media under its wing: *Oche!* Magazine. It has since built strong international connections, a growing list of celebrity influencers and is fast developing the most connected audience in darts through its various outlets and partners.

Phil Lanning, *Darts World* Editor, said "It’s amazing to have such an iconic brand onboard with us and shows WINMAU’s courage of leadership in the modern digital era. *Darts World* and WINMAU will continue to share their absolute passion for darts to develop the sport at all levels”.

BRASS V TUNGSTEN – THE DEBATE CONTINUES

Author and subscriber Mat Coward writes:

The discussion about brass vs tungsten is fascinating. Like just about every other young darter in 1976 or 77 I bought a set of tungstens (from a barber's shop in Weston-super-Mare; wonder if anyone else remembers it?) as soon as I could afford them, because ... well, everyone at that time switched to tungsten as soon as they could. Their superiority was simply unquestioned. You'd almost have felt embarrassed to play with anything else; it would have suggested that you weren't a serious player.

As it happens, I do think tungsten was better for me: in those days, I used a very light grip, more or less balancing the dart on my fingers, and this was much easier to achieve with a long, thin, light tungsten than with a short, fat, heavy brass. I was far more successful with my tungstens than with anything else. However, as many readers will testify, age tends to rob you off the ability to hold a dart quite so delicately - if I was playing regularly now, I might well consider brass as being easier for my now more arthritic, tighter grip.

Reading the responses so far, and especially from Dave Whitcombe, I no longer think tungsten is inherently superior (apart from anything, brass is a much nicer material to handle). But i think one material can be better than another for the individual player, in the sense that it could suit your personal game better.

Cheers Mat. It took me ages to ‘convert’ to tungsten having had a custom set of chrome darts made for which I used for years.

FORMER WELSH INTERNATIONAL NEEDS YOUR HELP

Former Wales International dart player, Martin Thomas, is looking for copies of the Fads Homecare Men’s Darts International Scoresheets for Wales v Scotland and England v Wales

(1984) Scotland v Wales and Wales v England (1985) and Wales v Scotland and England v Wales (1986). Martin told me

In particular I am looking for a record of my individual games during this time as I'd like to add them to some framed shirts I have been asked to supply. They don't necessarily need to be copies of the official scoresheets; just a record of my actual scores would help as I can transfer these on to a sheet himself.

If anyone has anything recorded from these games please contact me in the first instance at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com and I will pass your message on to Martin.

PETER WRIGHT – ‘MR. ADAPTABLE’



What can you say about Peter Wright that hasn't already been said before? 'Snakebite' is renowned for changing his darts every five minutes yet maintaining his consistency but what about the old wooden French darts? Well, thanks to the extremely nice folk at Red Dragon Darts, DDN is able to reveal what happened when the ever-versatile 'Snakebite' was asked to try out a set of extremely old turkey feather-flighted arrows.



Really the result should never have been in doubt. As can be seen, Peter's first three darts scored 140! (Images © 2020 Red Dragon Darts. Used with permission)

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