

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 129

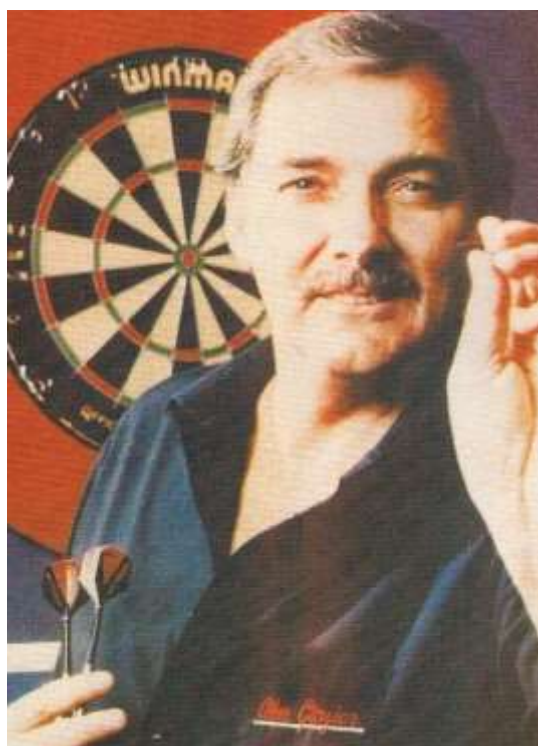
www.patrickchaplin.com

December 2020



ALAN GLAZIER

Yet another English darting legend has passed away in recent days: the former England international Alan Glazier who died on 12th November.



So often referred to by people not in the know as the 'nearly man', Alan Glazier was anything but. He was also probably the best left-handed player who ever threw a dart. He was the man they dubbed

THE TON MACHINE

It was back in November 2004 that I first spoke to Alan. Up until that time I had only seen him play darts on TV and read about his exploits in *Darts World* and other darts newspapers and magazines.

Unfairly, in my opinion, Alan had often been called the 'nearly man' of darts. Presumably those who say that do so because he has never won the Embassy and has been runner-up in more top darts tournaments than some professional darts players of today have actually played in.

For those who have played with or against him or count Alan as one of their friends, they *know* that this is no reflection of the achievements of the player also known as 'The Man in Black' (not surprising as he usually dressed entirely in black).

Alan was born in Staines, Middlesex 21st January 1939. His father Bill was a farm worker and his mother Rose a factory worker. After he left school Alan became an engineer. He played his first serious darts matches for the Jenny Lind pub, Hampton Hill, in the local Twickenham League. He then transferred his allegiance to "The Molesey" and then in 1970 he was invited to play for Slough in the London Super League. Alan played London Super League for ten years and in 1977 he was selected to play for England, eventually earning twenty-seven caps over fifteen years. His record reads Won 19, Lost 8.

When I asked Alan about his County record he replied, "It was wherever I laid my hat really!" This is abundantly clear from the fact that, in addition to his ten years with London, Alan also played for Bedfordshire (three years), Surrey (between three and four years), County Durham (three years) and finally ten years with Lancashire.

Alan's role model was twice *News of the World* Individual Darts Champion, Tom Barrett. Alan told me, "What a player! He lived just round the corner from me and I played in the same darts team as him for the *Airman* pub in Feltham."

In 1973, things started to move for Alan. He made real progress in a number of major darts tournaments including reaching the final of both the British Open (where he lost to Alan Evans) and the Surrey Open. Alan said, "Requests started coming in asking me to play exhibitions in local pubs at £15 a time. I played exhibitions all over the place and decided to go professional." Shortly after that Alan Evans joined the professional ranks too.

Alan thoroughly enjoyed the circuit; travelling the world for ranking points and enjoying himself along the way. Of the social life on the road he quipped, "You'd always find me, Dave Whitcombe and John Lowe in the bar."

Alan was sponsored by WINMAU (then under the ownership of Harry Kicks) for nineteen years from the 1973/74 season, the company covering all of his costs incurred in pursuing ranking points around the country and the rest of the world. WINMAU also made the 'Alan Glazier' dart (Alan's preferred weight was 24 grms) a product manufactured today by Mac Kicks of Haverhill, Suffolk.

The late 1970s was a purple patch for Alan. In 1977 he went over to the USA and had what Derek Brown, author of *The Guinness Book of Darts*, described as a 'golden summer' when Alan scooped up the North American Open (one, if not *the* most difficult tournament on the circuit) and the Santa Monica Open. He also won the Boston Open that same year. In all, Alan won *fourteen* darts trophies in America that summer and, according to *Darts World* (Issue 59, October 1977), the trophies had a seat of their own on the plane home!

On that plane he received a message to contact Charles Cornell of Marlboro tobacco as soon as he landed. He did so and Charles told Alan that he wanted him to set up a team of top darters to undertake 'loads of shows and exhibitions' to promote his company's brand of cigarettes. This team became known as 'The Marlboro Team of Champions' and the original line-up consisted of Tony Brown (England), Leighton Rees (Wales), Rab Smith (Scotland) plus Alan as captain and with Colin Baker (England) as reserve. (See his autographed 'Marlboro' photocard above right. (The author's collection.)



When Alan left the Team, the captaincy passed to John Lowe who had joined in the interim. To top off a great year Olly Croft of the BDO invited Alan to captain England for one year.

The following year Alan won the Swedish Open and in 1980 the Embassy LV Individual title. But the major titles in Britain eluded him. Alan reached the Grand Final of the *News of the World* in 1978/79 but was beaten 2-0 by Bobby George. Like many darts champions,

Alan's ambition was to win the Embassy, but it was not to be. The best he achieved in the Embassy World Professional Darts Championship was to reach the semi-finals in 1986. There his progress was halted by Eric Bristow, five sets to three. Alan told me, "I was worn out. The previous day I had spent *three hours* beating Australian Terry O'Dea in the quarter final!" The following year Alan won the Jersey Open.

When the World Darts Council (later renamed the Professional Darts Corporation (PDC)) was formed in 1993, Alan was approached to join the new organisation. He told me, "I was asked by the WDC to join, but I didn't. Bobby George, Leighton Rees and I decided not to go. For me it was a question of loyalty. I thought to myself 'Why change?' Plus, of course, I was getting older. I was twenty-seven years with the BDO. I'd done all I could do." So, whilst the 'rebel' sixteen players transferred their allegiance to the WDC, Alan stayed loyal to the BDO and continued to play County darts.

In the late 1990s, Alan left the professional darting ranks for good. Alan said, "As you get older in any sport, you lose the killer instinct. I did and you really miss it." In 2008 Alan told me, "I do play the occasional exhibition and I also play darts locally for the Milnrow League (super league) on Sundays and the Spotland and District Darts League on Thursday."



Asked about 'present day darts' at the time, Alan said, "The pity is that a lot of people still don't have Sky TV so are restricted to what they see on BBC." Alan also had an interesting theory that the Embassy (now Lakeside) World Championship might eventually transfer to Holland when, or rather if, the current sponsor ceases to support the tournament. In fact, the future of that event, at the time of writing, is still to be confirmed. The recent collapse of the BDO, of course, hasn't helped.

As for the 'nearly man' tag, Alan said, "It has never bothered me. Being runner-up never affected me. Back in those days there was a competition to try for at least once a week and to get into the final against so many other top players was an achievement."

I asked Alan for his proudest moment and he replied "To play for England all that time. You can't beat it." Another achievement Alan is proud of is the 17-dart 1,001 he achieved at The Crown pub in Wetherby in 1977, his greatest year. "The pity is" said Alan, "that although it was witnessed by a good number of people, the record did not count because it was not achieved in an official match."

The photograph of Alan (above left) was taken at John Lowe's 60th birthday party in Chesterfield in July 2005 and we kept in touch on and off ever since. Back in 2008 I asked Alan what the future held for him and he replied, "I want to collect my pension and continue to play darts locally" and that seems to be exactly what he did. (Image © 2005 Chippix)

On hearing of Alan's death, Alan Warriner-Little tweeted 'Sad news to hear an old friend and top guy has passed away. Some great memories and a great fella. RIP.' Bobby George told me, "So sad to lose a great friend and player. My favourite darts player!"

Once again, the world family of darts has lost a legend. My sincere condolences to Christine and Alan's wider family and friends.

JOHN ZIMNAWODA

The article relating to the death of US darts star John Zimnawoda in last month's issue has resulted in a number of responses from subscribers.

From Australia George Foster and his wife Vicki wrote

What a sad story it is about the (update of) US champion, John Zimnawoda that you have included in this issue of DDN. At least you seemed to have provided his daughter some peace after all this time though, when she read about her Dad on your website. You help so many people in so many ways with your ever-continuing research. Keep up the great work. You certainly have a "worldwide reach" these days.

Brian H. wrote

It was poignant to read of the death of John Zimnawoda soon after his News of The World appearance & the effect on his young family but nice also that his achievements were highlighted & celebrated in your columns & appreciated by his daughter so many years later.

So much dart reporting these days is about ton+ averages, rankings & money won but at the heart of the game are these stories about the lesser known who achieve sometimes fleeting success, the rediscovered trophies or lost medals that, to my mind, make it all the more interesting & human.

So once again a big thank you for delving, discovering & sharing these snap-shots of past (& present) darting glory!

TONS & AVERAGES, RANKINGS & MONEY

I believe that Brian's point about 'tons & averages, rankings & money' is well made and a view I share.

I have also thought a lot about the lack of characters in the game these days. Apart from a few darts players dancing about on stage after their walk-on and a couple of singalongs with the crowd I don't see any proper characters in darts anymore. There is certainly no dissention in the ranks; no bad behaviour, which I guess is due to the Darts Regulation Authority (DRA) keeping an eye on things with the omnipresent threat of a player being banned and/or fined for serious wrong-doing, often resulting in the potential loss of a great deal of money.

I believe that this has rubbed away all the previous sharp edges (the interesting bits) of darts players' behaviour that fascinated or irritated the fans and filled the tabloid press with sensational stories in years gone by. Sadly though, tough control is a necessary evil if the game is to protect its professional status and earn the respect of other sports which have traditionally looked down on darts as a mere pub game. However, I believe this has made the sport (on television at least) 'softer' and less interesting.

Many people are tired of watching professional darts and seeing ton after ton going down on the scoreboard with clockwork regularity. The interest and stature of the game would be helped by deliberately making it more difficult and skilful than it is now by introducing a harder board and/or a longer throwing distance. Such a move would be bringing the game back closer to its original state and make it possible to marvel at brilliant play when the occasional 180 is scored.

The ordinary lunchtime and evening players do not need the glittering prizes, the big names, the commercialism of big-time darts. The way things are developing, professional darts may well be harmed or even killed by pulling it so far away from the real game.

No. That's not me talking. That was author Keith Turner in his book *Darts – The Complete Book of the Game* published forty years ago in 1980.

What do *DDN* readers think? Contact me on patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

NAIL-THROWING

Warren Ackary writes from Australia:

I took my time about getting to read your latest newsletter. Anyway, I finally got to read it[and], like all before it I enjoyed it. However, the section on throwing nails had me riveted. I've read about the nails in books etc even drawing pins but strangely had never seen a proper picture until your newsletter.

Are old original nails easy to come by or are they a "fad" sold in shops now? I must say the set with the wallet looked very nice (as all dart related "arrers" should be presented)

I replied

Four- and six-inch nails are of course still available from your local ironmonger or building suppliers. It's then up to you to decide whether to insert a dart point or leave them as they are.

*The wallet illustrated in the latest *DDN* was of course especially made for Cyril Pearce (pictured) for promotional purposes and, yes, I agree, it is the very best way of presenting them.*

(Sadly, I learned recently that Cyril had died in 2015.)



RUPERT CROFT-COOKE'S DARTS

Following my mentioning author Rupert Croft-Cooke's book *Darts* in the last issue of *DDN*, Mick Simpson wrote

*Thanks as ever for your *DDN*. Brilliant read again. I love reading about darts from the past. I'm sure I have that Croft-Cooke book in my collection. How strange it must have been to*

visit the pub all those years later and still have the dartboard in the same place? As you know most pubs now don't even have a dartboard.

On the same theme, Tom Cole emailed me from Canada to say

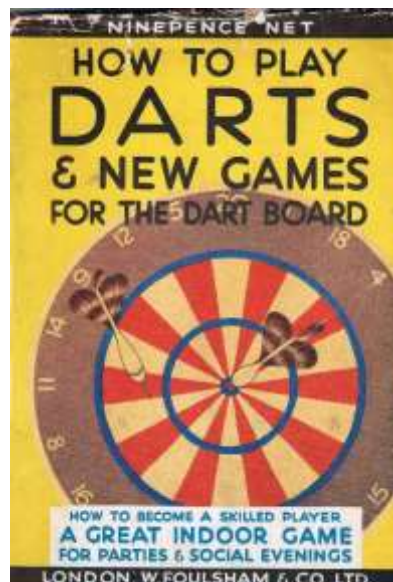
Thanks Patrick – great edition of the newsletter! The quotes from Rupert Croft-Cooke had me laughing out loud. Is the whole book written in that sort of style? If so, I'll have to track down a copy.



Rupert Croft-Cooke's book *Darts* was published in December 1936 and was the very first book devoted entirely to darts. There had been darts reports in some national Sunday newspapers and in provincial and local newspapers and indeed in brewery 'house' magazines but not a book. Croft-Cooke (pictured left) was responding to the demand for such a work stimulated by the middle and upper classes growing interest in the game. Around 30,000 words long (or should that be 'short'?) *Darts* sold extremely well and went to a second printing within one month of its original publication date.

Within the next year two more darts-related books were published, hoping to bounce off of the success of *Darts*. The first was *The Various Dart Games and How to Play Them* published in London by Universal Publications in 1937 and then, in the following year, John Young's *How to Play Darts & New Games for the Dart Board*, published in the capital by W. Foulsham & Co., Ltd. (pictured right).

Both are worth reading if you can find them. Young's book will stay in my mind forever as he was the author who wrote, erroneously of course, that the 'more expensive board is the "Bristle" board, made of compressed pig bristles on end...again[st] the grain, as it were, running through the board'. This 'fact' was repeated when a revised version of the book, now titled *Winning Darts* but still credited to Young, was published in 1981!



For a modern interpretation of the value (or otherwise) of Croft-Cooke's *Darts* I turned to Keith Turner, whose own book *Darts – The Complete Book of the Game* was published in 1980: the book that was key to my early understanding of the history of the sport providing as it did one of the best and considered interpretations of the development of the sport I had encountered up until that time.

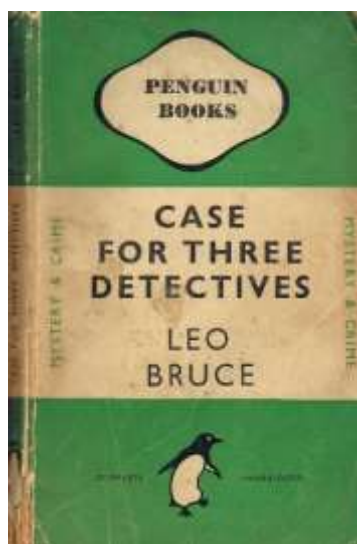
Turner described *Darts* as 'an insubstantial pocket-sized volume, very lightweight in content and with an extremely annoying patronising style to boot.' However, Turner added, 'What is important about it though is the valuable picture it gives of the status of the game at that time...it is however important as the first book entirely devoted to the game.'

Following on from our email exchange, Tom Cole, *did* go ahead and purchase a copy of *Darts* for about £10 (which was a bargain in my view). Tom told me

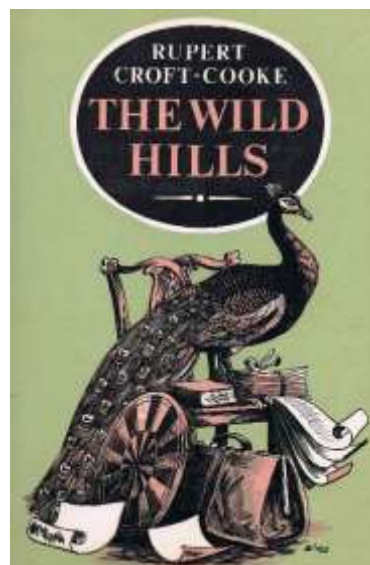
Just to say, the book arrived yesterday and I devoured it in one go. I loved it! I laughed out loud time and again while I was reading it – Croft-Cooke's definitely got a sort of Noel Coward-esque sense of humour. One particular favourite passage was his definition of 'Up in Annie's Room' in the glossary section of the book:

"Means that you now need the double 1, which is, of course, near the top of the board. I don't know who Annie may have been – I like to think of her as a dignified barmaid of the Edwardian era with a mountain of chestnut hair and a passion for darts. Perhaps – who can tell? – she kept a dart-board in her bedroom on the top floor, and practised assiduously. At any rate, she has been immortalised by this almost universal expression."

I'll definitely be looking for more of his books, and I imagine Darts is a book I'll re-read a few times; it's so much fun. Thanks again for highlighting the book in DDN.



Croft-Cooke never followed up *Darts* with any other darts-related work, although he did mention his passion for darts in some of his numerous works of autobiography including *The Purple Streak* (1966) and *The Wild Hills* (also 1966) the latter work featuring a dartboard on the front cover. Croft-Cooke also wrote a number of detective stories under the pseudonym Leo Bruce featuring a dart-playing officer named Sergeant Beef. (The front cover of Bruce's *Case of the Three Detectives* published in paperback by Penguin in 1946 is shown here. The book was originally published by Geoffrey Bles in 1936.)



Born in Edenbridge, Kent on 20th June 1903, Rupert Croft-Cooke wrote or co-authored many books both of fiction and non-fiction plus twenty-seven volumes of autobiography. Non-fiction subjects were as diverse as wine, the circus, cooking and travel. He died in Bournemouth, England on 10th June 1979.

The link <https://ericbrown.co.uk/rupert-croft-cooke/> features one of the best appreciations of Croft-Cooke's work I have found to date.

ALTERNATIVE GAMES – A MEMORY

Following up my mention in *DDN* #128 the so-called Cirencester Board, Jerry Feather from the USA writes:

Another great DDN, loved the double size board, reminds me of a joke bet we would make with new "hotshots". We would put a dollar bill up over the bullseye & say "Can you hit that? and most would say "Yes" and bang hit it. Then you would make them a bet that they couldn't hit it again and from a step forward and a step backwards. Then I would say if they missed "I will give you credit for hitting it", then have them take one step forward and do it again. Most would be high but if they hit then move back to one step behind the hockey and

most will be low. But a week or so later the same guys would come in and say “Let’s take that bet again” and do really well. Because there is a trick to it on the step forward shot shoot at the Double 3 on the step back shot shoot at the Double 20. Good for laughs and friend making!

That certainly brought back memories for me. I told Jerry

We have a similar game where (back in the day) a pound note (and when that went out of currency a five pound note) would be pinned across the bullseye: then one dart from the oche, the second one step towards the board and then the third one step back from the oche. All three in the note won the note unless there were lots playing and more than one hit the note with all three darts in which case there was a play-off until there was a clear winner. We also charged an entry fee.

Memories. Memories. Back in 1984 I wrote my first darts book titled *Arrows By Any Other Name – A Guide to Friendly Darts*. (Please don’t look for it online. You won’t find it as it was never published.) That early attempt at darts authorship included a chapter on alternative games in which I featured a game called ‘Hit the Quid’ (a ‘quid’ being an English one pound note which was then in circulation) two versions of the game being cited: one as described by Jerry above; the other being

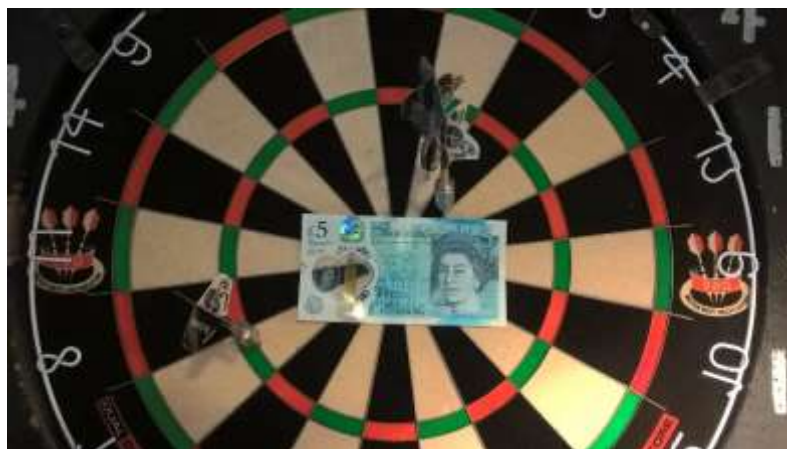
VERSION TWO: *Ask an unwilling volunteer or non-participant to throw a ‘wild’ dart at the board with his/her other hand [their non-throwing hand]. Where the dart sticks establishes where the pound note will be placed. The note is then folded up and jammed under the wire as close to where the ‘wild’ dart fell as possible. That is the target. The player that hits the note with a single dart first takes the pound.*

For both versions of the game a small entry fee was charged.

Thanks to Jerry for bringing back memories for me of some fun nights on the dartboard way back when. And just for fun I tried to ‘Hit the Fiver’ just now. To begin there was the problem that I couldn’t slip the edge of the five pound note under the wiring as we used to do as my dartboard is a WINMAU Blade 5 Dual Core. The note had to be secured using a couple of pins.

With no warm up and using my favourite, unique bottle-shaped, chrome darts (which I hadn’t thrown for six months), as per the rules, I threw one from the oche, one from one step in front and the third from one step back. The result?

Well, as you can see, I missed the target entirely so no cigar (or fiver). However, I was quite pleased, given that the English five pound note of today is a lot smaller than back then.



FLIGHT COLLECTING

Whilst providing feedback relating to nails (see above), Warren A. also wrote

Sadly, I miss throwing darts and was actually looking at all my darts (ONLY in ONE box=86/90 sets I think) so now I've started looking at building my collection of flights. I want to get an A4 folder filled [but the], only issue is the flights keep coming out of the pocket at the top. Maybe readers have an idea how to fix the problem as some flights are falling apart also!

I replied

As regards flight collecting, I use coin albums where sections slot into the pages of the album and thus prevent flights slipping out. My small collection (four albums) are single flights but, of course, some collectors collect whole sets of three... Of course, some flights (like the feather ones) won't fit into any album.



Former extreme darts flight collector Freddy Olivier (pictured above in 1996) used this method, in fact he was the one who recommended it to me. But, of course, not all flights can be so easily filed.

Feather flights and plastic, rigid flights such as the DORWIN flights or cheap plastic combined flight and stem require a special home: perhaps a plastic container. In the case of old flat, paper flights primarily used for advertising tobacco, cigarettes and beer, (see examples, left, from my collection) could easily be housed in a postcard or postal First Day Cover album.

How do other darts flight collectors look after their collections?

Have you any other suggestions that I can send to Warren? Let me know at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

AND FINALLY, WHETHER YOU CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS OR NOT...

I wish you, your families and friends a very happy festive season which I hope you will all enjoy despite the restrictions placed on us all by Covid-19. Happy New Year too.

The Christmas advertisement (below) from the December 1979 issue of *Darts World* promoting ELKADART products is featured here in the hope that it will bring a smile to your face during these torrid times. The advert suggested Christmas gifts of ‘Nickel plated darts’, a ‘BDO Bumper Pack’ plus ‘specially designed flights and canes.’

In that same issue a company named STRADNET from Hitchin in Hertfordshire advertised ‘pin on’ games for the dartboard featuring ‘Darts Descent’, ‘Cricket Darts’, ‘Card Darts’, ‘Put and Take’ and ‘Coin Darts’ - only £1.85 per set - whilst a festive-titled article ‘No room at the Inn’ in the magazine told not the Christmas story but the tale of the *Wakefield Arms*, Leyton, East London where they had run out of space to display their numerous darts trophies.



And, please, don't forget that if you are stuck for a Christmas present for your darts-mad husband, wife, son or daughter or best friend my books *180! Fascinating Darts Facts* (Published by the History Press), *Darts -Skills, Tactics, Techniques* (The Crowood Press) and *Darts in England – A social history* (Manchester University Press) are still available via the respective publisher's websites.

On a more serious note, what does 2021 hold for darts? I long to return to my local and play a game of 501 or 101-straight in with my best friend Colin. Darts in one hand, a pint of beer in the other. But my local, the *Carpenters Arms*, is essentially a beerhouse: no ‘substantial’ food (except potato crisps, nuts and pork scratchings) is sold which is essential to qualify in the UK, in some areas, for pubs to re-open. Who knows when the *Carps* will be allowed to reopen? There are so many issues that affect and will continue to affect the possible return of darts in 2021 to its proper home: the public house or bar. The Trade itself is continually under threat with already a large number of Pubcos, brewers and even free house owners announcing permanent closures. Let's hope we will be able to play darts *properly* again soon.

MY RESEARCH IS SPONSORED BY

WINMAU®
THE FORCE BEHIND DARTS™

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).