

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 139

www.patrickchaplin.com

October 2021



THE PHANTOM ARROW

In the Summer of 1967, Ted Cain, the owner of a country club at Kirklington, near Carlisle, was looking for a different stage attraction to entertain his patrons.



He came up with the idea of booking a darts champion who would take on ten challengers each night on stage and, based on the theory that the darter was unbeatable, Ted offered £10 to anyone who could take a game off of his man. Ted felt that as this would be an unlikely event, his money was quite safe.

The name chosen for Ted's champion was 'THE PHANTOM ARROW'.

It was pure showmanship of course, the darter wearing a tight black full-face mask to ensure anonymity. In addition, he never spoke. The Phantom was considered to be so good that he agreed to play *in gloves* to give the punters a chance. The mystery darter was booked for one night per week for the summer. The chance of winning £10 (a sum which equated to £190 in 2020) meant there was no shortage of challengers who thronged to the club much as Ted had hoped.

However, things did not quite go according to plan, 'The Phantom' catching the imagination of the nation when the *Daily Mirror* of 4th July that year ran the headline 'PHANTOM ARROW'S DEADLY DARTS HIT TED'S POCKET'.

The Phantom had been beaten *four times in one night*, costing Ted £40 in the process. "This could cost me a fortune", said Ted. "Even a local farmer I can beat myself picked up a tenner. And I'm no darts expert!"

The Phantom's identity had been kept a closely guarded secret. After that first night, and his wallet £40 lighter, Ted quipped, "Now he is even less likely to want anyone to know who he is!"

But Ted's fears of The Phantom Arrow burning a large hole in his pocket were totally unfounded. Four days later, the *Daily Mirror* on 8th July reported

At last he's done it! The Phantom Arrow, the top darts player who is masked in mystery, has found his form. He wiped the board with ten challengers last night after costing club owner Ted Cain £40 in five days ago...

Indeed, 'The 'Phantom' played a total of 146 games at Kirklington Hall during the summer and won 137 of them, costing Ted Cain a mere £90 over fifteen weeks.

But who was The Phantom Arrow?

1967 was a particularly good year for Graham Frith, a darts player from Carlisle. In addition to numerous local successes, Graham reached the finals of the *News of the World* Individual Darts Championship of England and Wales having won the North of England Divisional title. The Grand Finals were held at the Alexandra Palace, London N. 22 on Saturday 22nd April. The *News of the World* programme that year stated

Carlisle's Graham Frith has been in bad health for the past nine months. It took a lot of courage even to enter for these championships, and it took courage plus ability to get to these finals.

With this kind of determination – and with the ability he showed in his Divisional win at Tynemouth – who's to say that Graham won't complete a remarkable recovery by taking the title back to the North of England?

In the North of England Divisional Finals at the Plaza Ballroom, Tynemouth, North Shields on the evening of Tuesday 14th March 1967, Graham had swept all before him without dropping a match. First to fall was Brian Howe of the *Welsh Harp*, Trimdon Grange (The Hartlepoons Area) (2-0) then, in the semi-finals, Frith beat Jim Graham of the Senhouse Working Men's Club, (the Workington Area champion) (2-0). He retained a third clean sheet in the final, beating Bob Hunter of the Corporation Social Club, Gateshead (the Sunderland Area champion) 2-0.

Graham Frith is pictured here (on the right of the photograph) being presented with the North of England Divisional trophy by Mr. E. Davis, Sales Manager of the Scottish-Newcastle Breweries. (Photograph © *News of the World*. Used with permission.)



With such a performance at the Divisional finals, it seemed that everything was set for a great run in the Grand Finals for Graham, playing out of the *Cumberland Inn*, Carlisle. But it was not to be. Graham fell in the quarter-finals to Terry Pickard, the Lancashire and Cheshire Divisional champion (playing out of the Mitre Sports and Social Club, Burnley, Lancs). Pickard, a 29-year-old miner, took the match 2-1.

Graham had previously made it to the North of England Divisional Finals of the *News of the World*, back in 1961. Those finals were held on 7th March at the Milvain Hall, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. On that occasion, having beaten Sid Ternett, the Sunderland Area champion 2-1 in the quarter-final, then Fred Nicholson, the Kendal Area champion, in the semi-final, Graham then fell in the Divisional Final to Alec Adamson (Durham Area champion).

Graham Frith could take some solace though from that Adamson, the man who beat him that night, went on to lift the *News of the World* title at the Alexandra Palace on 22nd April. Given such credentials, it was not surprising that Graham was asked to star in the Kirklington Hall cabaret as 'The Phantom Arrow'.

As Graham was a well-known darter in the area, further measures had to be taken to convince those who thought he was 'The Phantom' that it was not the case. Thus, during his albeit short cabaret career, Graham was seen around Carlisle sporting a plaster cast on his right arm. (The cast was especially made for him and had a zip fastener on the inside of the arm!) Because of his 'broken arm', Graham was unable to play his regular pub darts and for this reason the ruse was even more convincing. How could he possibly be The Phantom? Still, many remained convinced thought Graham to be the mysterious, masked darter but that plaster cast kept the doubt remaining.

In discussion in 1990 Graham said

"Today I play darts only once a week on average. But I look back at the time I was The Phantom Arrow and smile. After all, how many darts players can claim to have been top of the bill with Rue and The Rockets as the supporting act?"

© Patrick Chaplin 2021

(The original version of 'The Phantom Arrow' was published in *Darts World*, Issue 217, December 1990. Revised August 2021)

CLIMAX 78 – FEEDBACK

Subscriber Patrick Corrigan has responded to my article relating to the Climax 78 featured in #138. He wrote

Thanks Patrick. Once again another very interesting DDN. I entered the Coventry Climax competition. I was working for Colgate - Palmolive, and was sent to Coventry Climax for a two weeks course to become a FLT [Fork Lift Truck] training instructor in 1976. I travelled back to Manchester on the Thursday night as my darts team had a clash of the top two teams in the Salford friendly league, which we won, but I couldn't drink too much to celebrate, as I had to be back in Coventry the next morning to continue the course, but did manage to pass that too.



We had to give a presentation as part of the course, on any subject we chose. I gave a presentation on "The Olde World of Darts" about the history of darts, which I mainly lifted from Tom Barrett's book. [See cover of Tom's book, left.] It went down very well, but I can't claim that was the reason for them staging a dart's competition, (if only) but I would like to.

Pity I didn't do as well in their competition. Unfortunately, I did not make it to the final. It was, as you indicated, only held once, but was very well attended and a great pity that it didn't continue. Happy days.

Thanks Patrick. Tom Barrett's book *Darts* was published in 1973 and, in my view, remains to this day one of the best autobiographies of a darts player ever written.

1940s-STYLE DARTBOARD AND DARTS – A REQUEST

At the end of July, I received an email from a filmmaker, Anthony Hontoir of Downwood Films based in Porthcawl, Glamorgan, Wales. Anthony wrote

Dear Patrick,

I am writing to you at the suggestion of Andy Jones, Sales Manager of Winmau, with whom I have recently been in contact. [See Anthony and Andy below. Image © WINMAU.] I live quite near his Bridgend-based company, and explained to him that I am making a film about the 1950 Llandow Air Disaster, in which 75 South Wales rugby supporters and five crew died when an Avro Tudor 5 airliner crashed whilst bringing them back from Ireland, where they had been to see Ireland play Wales in a rugby international.



Of the many casualties, the area that suffered most was the village of Llantarnam and surrounding area near Cwmbran, and the victims were regulars at The Greenhouse pub, where I have already been to do some contemporary shots. One thing of special interest was the dartboard.

I filmed the present dartboard, but would also like to take a black & white

shot of the sort of dartboard that would have hung in the bar in 1950, showing three darts of that period going into it. Andy said he might be able to help, both with the board and darts, but he suggested that I should get in touch with you in case you had any observations to make about it, and he said you might even be interested in mentioning it in one of your newsletters.

I will get hold of a square of hardboard upon which the dartboard can be affixed, and then place the assembly on a white-painted wall in my garage studio to represent the interior wall of The Greenhouse pub.

[Image of the interior of *The Greenhouse* pub today © S.A. Brain & Co. Ltd.]



When photographed in black & white, I am sure it will give just the right effect. I did wonder if I should paint the number ring, and the numerals, in silver paint rather than leaving it in its white finish...And I will be sure to throw a few darts at the board beforehand to make it look as if it is well used. Apart from concentrating around the treble twenty, is there anywhere else that should show a respectable number of dart holes?

Having gone to all the trouble of acquiring a correct-looking dartboard and putting it into a proper setting, it would be a pity to slip up on the darts themselves. I envisage two black & white shots, of the dartboard in medium close-up: the first shot shows three darts going into



the dartboard, accompanied on the soundtrack by the background noise of typical bar-room chatter, mixing to just the dartboard, no darts, and silence, with low lighting, to suggest the transformation from the Greenhouse pub prior to the accident, with its usual customers playing a game of darts, to the quietness after the accident, those same customers now deceased.

As for the dartboard itself, I have detached the number ring, which I will paint metallic silver. It was fastened in place with four plastic clips, but I will replace these with eight U-shaped metal staples, more in keeping with the period.

I was able to provide Anthony with a set of brass barrelled, wooden stemmed darts with turkey feather flights which I believed to have been used at the time.

FALLON SHERROCK – ANOTHER MILESTONE

Fallon Sherrock broke another glass ceiling for ladies' darts recently. On Saturday 18th September in Copenhagen, she made it through to the final of the Nordic Darts Masters where she met three-times World Champion, Netherland's Michael van Gerwen.

On Friday 17th Fallon was drawn against 52-year-old Danish professional darts player, Niels Heinsoe and beat him 6-1. In theory, waiting for her was World Champion Gerwyn Price but he withdrew due to a recurrence of an elbow injury which meant that Fallon was given a 'bye' to the semi-finals. There she eventually met Belgium's Dimitri Van Den Bergh. In that match, Fallon produced an incredible fightback from 8-2 down to beat Dimitri 11-10 and thus became the first woman to reach a PDC World Tour final.



There she met the former Number One, Michael Van Gerwen. Surprisingly (some might have said), Fallon went into a 6-3 lead but MvG ended up to be just too good for her as he turned up the heat to win 11-7. (Image of MvG and Fallon © Lawrence Lustig/PDC. Used with permission.)

I watched Fallon on the Saturday. I had no idea she was so good! Even so, I feared that she faced a demolition by MvG but, of course, that was not the case. All power to her. I also noticed how so much more confident Fallon is when she is interviewed. She gave MvG a

super run for his/our money. As regards MvG, I couldn't work out if he was crying because he had simply won, or because he'd beaten a woman, or what he'd've felt like if Fallon had beaten him. My guess is that the latter would have done him in forever. A great match though.

Seeing the emotional MvG after beating Fallon, I guessed that whoever he met next would receive a thumping. I was right. He saw England's Rob Cross 6-3 in Gibraltar with a dominant performance sealing the match with an 11-dart leg. However, despite an average of 105 in the semi-final against Gerwyn Price, it was the Welshman, refreshed after resting his elbow injury, who progressed into the final where he then whitewashed Mensur Suljovic 8-0.

JOE HITCHCOCK – HIS DARTS

Back in October 2020 subscriber Lyndon Henry emailed me

You may well have covered this in the past but do you know what darts did the great Joe Hitchcock use and are there any photos of them?

I sent a holding reply to Lyndon but then filed his question away. Two years later I've discovered it again but this time have replied properly. I wrote

Rediscovering your email today, I have found the attached photocopy of a page in the 1976 Harrows catalogue of Joe's darts ('a quality dart turned from 'nickel silvers' to the original Joe Hitchcock pattern. Weight 18 grms & 22 grms approx., and fitted with black moulded shafts and re-seal flights. Complete in real leather case and with a tablet of Finger-Grip.')



At the same time (October 2020) another subscriber (whose name I have mis-filed) wrote

I do have a set each of Joe's Harrows made "Barracuda Slims" and "Barracuda Stouts" in the original Harrows leather wallets. I got them both probably 20 years ago after many, many years of searching. Apparently, the Joe Hitchcock sets were some of the earliest ranges offered when Harrows began in 1973.

So, apologies to both of you. I will try to make up for this by delving more into my archive for a better image of Joe's darts!

BERNARD YOUNG MBE



M.Y. Darts was (and may still be) a well-known company making and selling dartboards and darts and other accessories. Bernard Young, (pictured, left, in 1973: image © Willie Pereira) the man who was the 'Y' in the company name, had been in darts manufacturing for many years. Indeed M.Y.'s first export order went to America on the maiden voyage of the *Queen Mary* in 1936; a batch of elm dartboards packed in moss to keep them damp.

In the early 1960s Bernard parted company with Mr. Sidney Marks (the 'M' of the company) and having sold his interest in M.Y.,

retired to the village of Shillingford of the north bank of the River Thames in south Oxfordshire. However, retirement did not appear to suit him. He was bored. So, he and his wife Constance formed a new company, Selected Toys Limited.

The company was originally set up in one unit, employing twelve employees, on an industrial estate in Didcot, Berkshire. By 1973 Selected Toys occupied five units and at busy times, especially around Christmas, employed over 100 people. Selected Toys Ltd., was very much a family business. In 1973, in addition to Bernard and his wife Constance they had one daughter and two son-in-laws working with them.

Under the trade name of 'Dee Bee', the firm had an amazing record of exporting 98.4% of their production. Most of their dartboards were made by the coiled paper process, although they did produce 10,000 bristle boards annually. (The photograph, right, shows Bernard Young holding two bristle boards in front of hundreds of his paper Dee Bee dartboards.) Darts were manufactured off-site by an independent company and were 'finished off' and packaged at Didcot.



In the Queen's Birthday Honours List announced in June 1973, Bernard Young was made a Member of the British Empire (MBE) in recognition of his export achievements. Mr. Young, who, at that time, was 68 years old was planning his second retirement in which he might even find time to play darts. He told *Darts World*, "I used to play quite a lot and I was quite a nifty player."

(Bernard Rosser Young b. 7th February 1906, d. January 1986.)

THE CASE FOR CHILDREN PLAYING DARTS

Over the years many people have appreciated the value of darts in teaching young children mathematics. Here's just one recommendation from an anonymous journalist, a contributor to a darts publication.

Now I am going to make a suggestion that may seem fantastic...I suggest that darts boards be installed in every school in Great Britain. I maintain that darts games should be included in the recreational curriculum of every school.

For the younger children the author suggested coil paper dartboards but for the older children he wrote that the 'real thing' should be installed, and that every school would have its own league. The author wrote

This suggestion is not made for the sole reason that it would be a “nice” game for the children to play. The game of darts, in my opinion, is of undisputed educational value. Let children play darts at school and I’ll guarantee their arithmetical powers will be sharpened ten-fold. Perhaps some school teacher will be inclined to laugh at me, but all I ask is that one teacher makes the experiment – and by that experiment I am prepared to stand or fall.

*Get children in front of a darts board and you’ll find them doing mental additions and subtractions eagerly and quickly – because it’s a **game**! I know that in lots of schools today ridiculous, inane games have been introduced by educational cranks because they are said to be of “psychological value.” Children in their teens have to pick pieces of coloured paper, unravel string and knotted wool, hop about on one leg like young kangaroos, answer lists of silly questions prepared by silly old fogies who call themselves psychologists. Why not let them have a “jolly old game of darts” instead? They would enjoy it ten times more, and it would be of greater educational stimulus.*

Go into any real stronghold of darts and watch the score-takers and checkers at work. Put some chartered accountant on the job and he would hesitate and fumble. The practised darts player calculates like lightning. He can tell you what number is left almost before the dart has entered the board. (And the probability is that at school he was possibility a dunce at arithmetics!)
(Cartoon © 2010. Chris Murray.)



At the end of this article, the journalist decided to devote at least one page of his publication in future to the activities of children’s darts teams, boys *and* girls. He also threw out a challenge to the children to tell him their stories when, for example, they “whitewashed Pa or Ma” or like the “boy dartist” from Brighton who “can beat most of the men in the district.”

As far as I am aware, British schools have never introduced darts into the curriculum. The above article was published in *Darts Weekly News*, 12th February 1938.

MY RESEARCH IS SPONSORED BY

WINMAU®
THE FORCE BEHIND DARTS™

NOTE: Text © 2021 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).