

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

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AN INTERESTING TWIST TO SOLVING CORONAVIRUS?

I am not sure about the rest of you but I am becoming more and more confused by the information and non-information from the UK Government about what we should be doing (or not doing) to keep us and our loved ones safe and well. I guess it's the same with *DDN* readers all over the world.

**THAT HIGH-TECH
GOVERNMENT METHOD
USED TO WORK OUT
FOREIGN QUARANTINES,
EXAM RESULTS AND LOCAL
LOCKDOWNS**



While the situation remains serious, I was allowed a smile when the satirical publication *Private Eye* featured darts as 'the high-tech' solution to our Government's problems. (See left. Extract from *Private Eye Annual 2020 – The Covid Year*.) I was pleased to note that they chose a WINMAU Blade dartboard!

Former World Champion, Mark Webster is announced as its Global Brand Ambassador for Monarch Water.

I am certain that readers will recall the name of Ian Flack, who was associated with WINMAU for many years, leaving last year to work for Monarch Water. Well, it hasn't taken Ian very long at all to involve his new company with his beloved darts. Monarch Water announced that

Mark Webster, former World Champion darts player and qualified plumber, has been named as the new global brand ambassador for leading water treatment manufacturer, Monarch Water.

During his illustrious career, Mark has gained numerous accolades in the sport, including winning the World Championship in 2008 plus a whole host of other World and European titles. He is currently a commentator for the



darts on Sky Sports, which has the second highest viewing figures after Premier League football.

Mark said “I’m delighted to be joining the Monarch team and am really looking forward to working with them. My background in plumbing means I know the company and its reputation within the industry, having installed Monarch softeners and filtration systems over the course of my plumbing career.”

Ian Flack, Monarch Water’s Head of Sales, added, “I am very happy to have Mark join the Monarch team. He will be the perfect ambassador for our brand and, being a qualified plumber, he knows the industry inside out. We will be working together on some very exciting initiatives going into 2022.”

Ian caught up with Mark ahead of the next Darts World Championship to discuss his predictions as well as the importance of water treatment and how Monarch’s products can help.

*You can check out the full conversation here – <https://monarchwater.co.uk/markwebster>
Mark’s Twitter address is: @Webby180*

MONEY RACERS - CHARLIE ARGUE – A DELAYED RESPONSE

Some years ago, more than I care to recall, friend and subscriber, Chris Murray, asked what I knew about a darts player named Charlie Argue. I searched my archive but found nothing. Then, five years ago Chris sent me an email dated 29th June 2016. He wrote

Patrick

I don't know if you remember me asking you about a dart player called Charlie Argue? Years ago - no joy. I gave up trying to trace him.

I ran into him a long time ago (1980s?) in a pub called the Railway Tavern in Woodford Green, Essex near to where I used to live. I didn't use the pub much... But it did have a dartboard. I was throwing up at the board (darts) when this gent in glasses sidled up and asked me if I wanted to play a game.

*Before I knew it, we were playing for half a pint of beer and then small amounts of money. I knew there was something going on but I was a cocky b*gger in those days and knew I could play well. The upshot of the whole thing was that we played quite a few games with the stakes going up and fortunes swinging one way and the other. At the end I believe we settled on an honourable dead heat. I always remember that day as it taught me that it is easy to get carried away with small stakes escalating into larger. I didn't bet on darts again. Anyway, the point of all this trip down memory lane malarkey is that idly googling his name I have found that he does (did?) indeed exist (I thought I was going mad) - see below extract from Bobby Dazzler.*

Bobby wrote

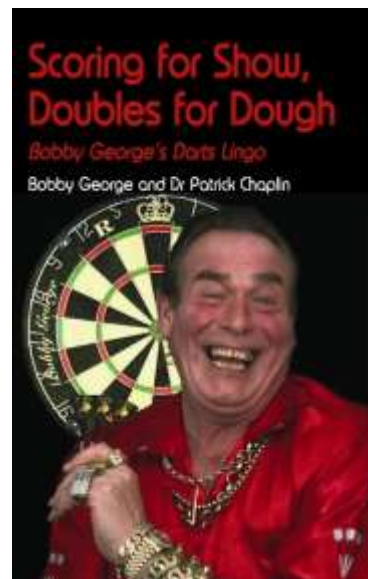
Within just a few months of taking up competitive darts, I had realised that there were only so many tournaments to play in and that the available prize money was next to nothing. Darts could pay well but you needed to know the right people and in Charlie Argue and Tommy O'Regan, I had two mates who knew a thing about the lucrative world of money races...

[For those who are not familiar with the phrase 'money races', Bobby explains this in his book *Scoring for Show, Doubles for Dough* (2011):

Money racers

This takes me back. This is one of the best ways of learning your darting skills but the biggest drawback is that money racers were dangerous and are illegal or at least they were in the early days.

Usually played behind closed doors after hours but often played openly in the pub, two top local darts players are pitted against each other in a winner-takes-all match. The prize money, put up by each opponent's backers, is more than covered by the hundreds, often thousands of pounds worth of bets placed by punters on the outcome.



In his autobiography *Bobby Dazzler* (2006), Bobby recalled

I worked with Charlie on the Victoria Line project [building a new part of the London Underground system]. He was a locomotive driver in the tunnels and one night he fell asleep at the wheel and lost a finger in an accident. Luckily, it was on his left, non-throwing hand. Charlie played darts at the Maypole [Barkingside] and would often throw matches on purpose and then ask for a re-match with money at stake. Once the money was on offer, he would wipe the floor with the opposition. Charlie knew how darts worked from top to bottom and would do anything to put his opponent off, from stepping over the oche to lighting up a fag during a throw. [Lighting up a cigarette while the opposition was throwing their darts was a common act of 'gamesmanship' usually resulting in smoke being puffed across the players' line of sight and into their eyes.]

I played him once in a competitive match and he was murder, the worst player for barracking [either talking or shouting to put the opponent off] that I have ever come across. He was given a warning. That experience introduced me to the bad side of darts, which did me a favour. It taught me how to guard against barracking and I will always be grateful to Charlie for that.

Chris Murray commented, "*Bobby's description rings absolutely true!*"

Interesting, when Bobby first played at the Maypole, he was grateful to Charlie. Bobby wrote that, in those very early days, one of his drawbacks was the inability to count but Charlie helped him with that. On one occasion Bobby recalled that

"I still couldn't count for my life...I was faced with a 90 out-shot...to win the title but I didn't have a clue how to go about it. Luckily, Charlie was on hand to help me out. 'Treble 18,

Bob, ' he shouted from the floor. Well, I hit treble 18 but my mind was still a complete blank about what I should do next. Nerves sometimes make moments like that even worse and I just stood at the oche bewildered, looking for help. Charlie shouted out again, 'Just ask, Bob, ask.'

MC Derek Ransom told the audience to be quiet but mentioned to me that if I needed to know what was left, I was entitled to ask him. I never knew I could do that – I was so new to the game and lots to learn. So asked what was left, he told me 36 and I went bang, double 18. That is how I won the Essex Masters and with it a place in the World Masters. Just like that!

Looking back recently Bobby when I asked him of Charlie was still around, Bobby told me

He has died. He lived in Woodford. He was a hustler and big money racer. In money racing he would pretend he couldn't play well then say I'll play for 1001!!" A big character!!"

When I made enquiries of members of the Darts from the Past Facebook Group, (a Group that did not exist back when Chris Murray made his original enquiry) I received the following from members:

Keith Gouldstone: *"Charlie played around the Waltham Forest area for many years played a lot in the [Railway] tavern. Easily recognised by his extra thick glass lenses a bit of a character has sadly passed away."*

Gary North: *"Charlie once got banned from a local league for standing on the oche, instead of behind it."*

Frank Webb: *Charlie Argue what a character. Used to chase me and Kenny Bassi around Plaistow for money races in the Railway or Victoria E13. Always after us, thank God, although [a] good player. He did not win much. I remember him standing on top of raised oche with toes about 6 inches over line and Russ Bray was calling and shouted out "No score" and he went mental. RIP Charlie."*

Barry Clarke: *"I remember Roy Regan telling me that he disqualified him from a competition for exactly the same thing, giving him warnings and he took no notice."*

Paul Wright: *"Argue by name, Argue by nature. I had a few rows with him and he didn't like to chalk."*

John Jennings recalled *"Phil Jones put a story about him in Darts World before about him hitting a man in the nose while trying to hit the cigarette in his mouth. If you saw the thickness of the lenses of his glasses, no way you would have volunteered. Apparently, he told the bloke to stand still and was about to try again with the other two darts, but he wasn't about to stay there."*

Despite all this information I received relating to Charlie Argue I have failed to find a photograph of this darting character. So, if anyone can help, please contact me by email at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

Thanks to Bobby and Marie George for permission to use extracts from *Bobby Dazzler – My Story* (2006) and *Scoring for Show, Doubles for Dough – Bobby George's Darts Lingo* (2011) and to members of the Darts from the Past Facebook group for their memories.

MESSAGE FROM SEATTLE – CONVERSION TO SOFT-TIP?

Subscriber and great friend, Glen Huff, (pictured here in 2003 with the late Barry Twomlow) dropped me a line from Seattle. He suffered a house fire some time ago and has now moved into an apartment from which he told me



I eventually did get approval from the apartment managers to have a soft-tip dartboard here in the apartment, and my brother-in-law and sister installed it for me earlier in September. I couldn't have a steel-tip dartboard due possible damage to walls, furniture etc, but soft-tip board is ok. I have never played soft-tip over all the years I've played darts.

I bought some Eric Bristow Legend 22 gram soft-tip darts which are same weight as the Bristow steel-tip darts I've used for ages. So fitted the soft-tips with same stems and flights as my steel-tip darts and they feel nearly the same except for the plastic tips.

So, it's nice to be able to play some version of darts here in my apartment... even though soft-tip darts it's better than not having any dartboard in the apartment at all!

I am sure when circumstance allow, Glen will be able to venture out to play his beloved steel-tip game.

Glen continued

Thank you for continuing DDN issues - they are fantastic every issue and I look forward to them. I am so proud of you Patrick for continuing to publish them. No one else does what you are doing dear friend. Keep up the excellent work!

I really enjoyed reading about M.Y. Darts, recently and about Joe Hitchcock's Harrows darts. My first set of darts were a set of 26 gram M.Y. brass darts, in a red vinyl wallet, they were ¼ BSF Thread. I traded them decades ago for what set I no longer know or have.

In a recent issue of DDN you showed me a photo of the set I used to have. I don't recall which DDN it was in but have the issue in my email. My first dartboard was an M.Y. Eric Bristow Crafty Cockney dartboard which I used for many years. I still had it in my dartboard collection. Shortly before the house fire I found another M.Y. Eric Bristow Crafty Cockney dartboard still in its original cardboard box unopened. I bought it and had it about a month before the house fire where all my dartboards were too badly smoke-damaged to be saved. To find one in original unopened box after nearly 40 years had to be at this point a one-of-a-kind item...

Re. Joe Hitchcock Harrows darts. I was one of the subscribers you mentioned in the Joe Hitchcock article. I have a set of the Barracuda Slim and Barracuda Stout both in the original Harrows Game Shot dart wallets with what appear to be original stems. My sets don't have the finger grip wax. I searched for the Hitchcock sets for 25 years or so, so glad they survived fire.

OLD STONEFACE

Somebody asked me a while back how John Lowe was given the nickname 'Old Stoneface' and when? I knew that, before John gained that name, he tended to be known as either 'Lowey' or 'Lobo'. I also knew that, at the back of my mind it was either Sid Waddell or Bobby George who dubbed him 'Old Stoneface'.

The answer?

It was Bobby who once said that John looked like a toby jug so he called him 'Old Stoneface Lobo' and afterwards 'Old Stoneface' stuck.

Purely by coincidence, I was thumbing through back issues of *Darts World* magazine recently and on the 'Letters to the Editor' feature in the December 1981 edition, found the following letter:

*Dear Sir. When I play darts, my friends tell me that I am very stern looking, hence my darts name **Stoneface**. It's stuck with me but I don't mind as I rather like it.*

No. It wasn't a letter from John Lowe but one from Ed Edmunds, a darts player from Harlow, Essex.

A DARTBOARD ENQUIRY FROM 'SUNNY WAKEFIELD'

Reader Alec Hird, from 'Sunny Wakefield' sent me a link to an auction site which included the dartboard shown here (below, left). Alec wrote



'Twenty-four numbers, No number 16. I asked on dartsnutz. No joy. Just an interesting board. Just cannot see what use it is.'

Before the item had sold, I

believe the asking price had been in the area of £130.



I had certainly seen a *similar* dartboard (see above, right) which I had purchased from Chilham Darts of Chilham, Kent many years ago. I replied to Alec as follows:

This looks to me like a handmade fairground dartboard. I obtained something similar for my collection some years ago. In mine the 'O' segments reduce the punters chances of hitting the required high score, where, on yours, the '40' number and other high numbers avoid the punter hitting the 'under 21' score required.

Although I bought my fairground dartboard from Chilham Darts (no longer trading) but it was clear that the dartboards were handmade with the centre '21' painted in by, it looks like, a child of three - or even younger!

FOR YOUR DARTS LIBRARY

With so many new darts books coming out recently, including those by John Lowe and Keith Deller, it was a surprise for me to be sent a review copy of a darts-related book that was *not* biographical, *not* a 'How to Play' volume and *not* written by or about a famous darter.

A round of applause then to L. D. Pilling for producing his book *Flights of Fancy and other tales of the Dartboard*, a collection of stories all around the game. L. D. told me, "I hope some of the stories hit the target or, at least, find the board."

L. D. I found them fascinating.

The seven tales comprise of the title piece 'Flights of Fancy' (a murder mystery set in the world of flight collecting), 'Murder at the Oche' (a murder at Lord Melton's Christmas darts tournament which features the walk-on girls), 'Bullseye' (a darting ghost story), 'An Arrow of Outrageous Fortune' (darting magic), 'A Game of 'Martial Arts'' (darting deception), 'Match Darts' (throwing under pressure) and 'Last Dart in Hand' (where a player reflects on his darting career).

I am aware of excellent novels having been published centred around darts in the past, such as David Nobbs *Cupid's Dart* (2007) and Mat Coward's *In and Out* (2001) and, of course, Paul Seigel's *It's a Funny Game, Darts. Life. – The Best of Dartoid's World* (2005), his splendid collection of articles. However, *Flights of Fancy* is the first collection of darts-related tales I can remember.

I enjoyed all seven tales and recommend the book to you all. My favourite? Well, it simply has to be the title piece, *Flights of Fancy* a story about darts flight collecting. Not only is it a good tale but the author states in his Preface that it '*was inspired by an article on the topic written by Dr. Patrick Chaplin.*'

It is also the first time I have seen the word 'belopterophilist' (the collective word for collectors of darts flights, invented for me by the English Society at least two decades ago) outside of my own work!

L.D. Pilling's book *Flights of Fancy* was self-published in the autumn last year. (ISBN: 97984689779747.)



THE TRIANGLE INN

In last month's issue, #141, pages 6-7, reference was made to what may have been thought to be the *narrowest* darts oche area. (It looked more like where a toilet might have been! (But it wasn't.)) This may have had *DDN* readers thinking of unusual oche's they had played on or in this next example played in.

I just happened to be reading *'At the Sign of...The Journal of the Inn Sign Society'* Winter issue 2021, No. 129 where the editor made reference to the *Triangle Inn*, Cwndeuddwr, Rhayader, Powys, Wales (pictured recently). He wrote:

'A quaint triangular sign at this old inn in mid-Wales, which used to be a drovers inn. It has the nickname "the pit", because darts players had to stand in a pit because of the low ceiling.'



Some *DDN* readers may recall that I featured a 'pit' in #99 (June 2018) relating to the *Jolly Sailor* in West Looe, Cornwall. Pits seem to have been very common especially in the 1930s when darts became popular and landlords had to do something to accommodate the players or watch them move on to another pub which had darts.

As Rupert Croft-Cooke, author of the first book entirely devoted to darts, titled *Darts* (1936), observed that in many pubs licensees could not comply with a 5ft 8in height for the centre of the dartboard as *'the eccentricities of Elizabethan architects, who, apparently, failed to foresee the popularity game, make it impossible.'*

Thus a 'pit' for the players to stand in was the only answer!

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