

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

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PUTIN HIM DOWN

As regular readers know, I usually prepare an April Fool item, but this year I thought things were far too serious to have a laugh BUT a great friend of mine has taken a little liberty with a design that appeared on the 'net. (Copyright unknown) Instead, he decided to give this image of Putin a darts flavour, adding a dart (with Russian flag flight) instead of a pin!



And there he was...

GONE!

A MESSAGE FROM SLOVAKIA

At the beginning of last month, I received the following email from Michael Bennett writing from Malinovo, Slovakia.

Dear Patrick,

I do hope this finds you well.

On Sunday, I was watching the news here in Slovakia where I live, about the awful goings on in next-door Ukraine, when they showed an old quotation from C. S. Lewis, which he apparently wrote way back in 1948:

"If we are all going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb, let that bomb when it comes find us doing sensible and human things—praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts—not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs."

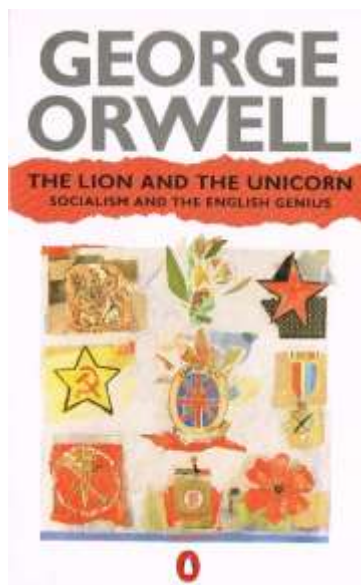
Had you heard that one before? I have to admit I had never known of it until now.

I must say I found it touching that even Lewis, an Oxford and Cambridge don and devout Christian writer, saw fit to mention having a glass of beer and a game of darts as a "sensible and human thing". Even my wife, who is darts-intolerant, thought it rather lovely, and so English.

I replied

'Dear Michael, Thank you so much for your email. I hope you and your family are, and remain, safe and well.

Despite years of researching for my PhD I have to admit that I never came across that C.S. Lewis quote, which I have now discovered (Thanks to you) comes from his 1948 essay *On Living in Fear of Nuclear War*.



It was not unusual for darts to be regarded as an essential part of Englishness.

Earlier, in 1941, George Orwell mentioned darts in *The Lion and the Unicorn – Socialism and the English Genius* (originally published in 1941) which I refer to in the Introduction of my book *Darts in England 1900-39 – A social history* (Manchester University Press, 2009). I wrote:

But the major difficulty inherent in the study of pub games in general and darts in particular is that so little has been written about such 'small-scale' pleasures; those important elements of English popular culture, those everyday activities 'hobbies and spare-time occupations' that Orwell identified in 1941 as being the very essence of Englishness and representative of the

'privateness of English life.' 'We are,' Orwell argued, 'a nation of stamp-collectors, pigeon-fanciers, amateur carpenters, coupon-snippers, darts-players, crossword-puzzle fans.'

Michael then replied:

Thank you for the Orwell quotation. Indeed, I have your book, which I very much enjoyed reading a few years ago, and your mention of it brought it back to me. I must read Orwell's essay!

Just as the invasion started, we had the WDF Slovak Open here. Although the turnout was good - several English players came, for example, and Laura Turner won the Ladies' Masters on the Sunday - there was a certain air of disbelief among us.

It's common to hear, "I can't believe this can happen in 2022." Alas, in fact it is constantly going on, just it has tended not to be quite so close to home. I can only hope they find some way of de-escalating sooner rather than later.

I hope you are well and getting better; I saw you on the BBC Wales programme about Alan Evans; you performed admirably.

Keep going! All good wishes,

Michael

Thanks Michael. It's always great to receive positive feedback.

WHAT'S GOING ON.

Doug Haney, one of my many USA subscribers, wrote

Patrick, I especially enjoyed your outstanding report this month. It is so relevant with what is going on around the world today. I often wonder where you get all your information. You are certainly a bag of knowledge. I look forward to receiving your report every time. Well done!!!

I told Doug that having been researching darts for more than thirty-five years, I am now surrounded with files and research papers concerning the game from the start, so I am never short of information I can use. Of course, my job is often made a little easier by readers dropping me a line or asking questions, like Doug did.

And here's another example. Chris Murray commented on the Joe Hitchcock article in DDN #144 (March):

Thanks, as usual, for DDN. Reading the stats for Joe Hitchcock makes you realise how different the game was BT (before tungsten). The scarcity of maximums reminds us of how bulky the brass darts were - and that is coupled with throwing from nine feet. I wonder how the current pros would fare under those conditions? I expect it has been done!

I'm not sure it has Chris.

MANCHESTER BOARD

I was pleased to receive a phone call from subscriber Bill Bell a few weeks ago asking what I knew about a 'mystery' dartboard he had purchased online (see photo). I was identified it straightaway as a Manchester Board; smaller than a London Board, where only the 19 segment is in the same position.



Bill told me that the board had been found in someone's loft and, clearly, had been there some years. It was indeed a great survivor because, as with all dartboards made of wood, if they were not kept moist, they would dry out and split, bending the wires of the segments out of shape. Bill wanted to know the best thing to do to preserve it.

Knowing that Bobby George had preserved the wooden dartboards that he had kept after his *News of the World* victories in 1978/79 (2-0 against Alan Glazier) and Rick Ney (USA) in 1985/86 (2-0) I asked him how he had done it.

Bobby's wife Marie replied:

'Bobby took wires off his boards and soaked the boards in clear resin which he left for five years soaking. Then disked the board and rewired.'

Your friend can brush off the board and keep painting it with the resin until it's hard. Mustn't get wet as it will crack.'

If Bill doesn't want to wait five years, I guess he'll have to duplicate the conditions that the board has been kept in for so long otherwise it *will* crack.

DR. DARTS IS MENTIONED ON RADIO 4

On Sunday 3rd April I received a phone call from a neighbour who told me that she had heard me being mentioned on BBC Radio 4, on a comedy programme called *The Undisputable Truth* featuring David Mitchell and others. Within minutes I received an email from another close friend which read

Hi Patrick. Just been listening to 'unbelievable truth' and you were mentioned!! You really are nationally famous.

The following day another email arrived from Professor Rohan McWilliam at Anglia Ruskin University (one of the academics who guided me through the rigours of my PhD. Rohan wrote:

Dear Patrick,

My colleague Jonathan Davis has just told me that you have just featured as an answer on Radio 4 'The Unbelievable Truth'. Contestants have to give a short speech and smuggle five truths in amongst lies. Holly Walsh spoke about Essex and made up a lie about Essex having the most people with PhDs, and then mentioned 'Dr Darts' which sounded like a lie. David Mitchell then said this was true and mentioned you and the subject of the PhD. So delighted!

Rohan then sent me the link to the programme:

2.20: [The Unbelievable Truth - Series 28 - Episode 1 - BBC Sounds](#)

I do hope that readers will be able to tune into it. My mention is about 1 minute 55 seconds into the programme.

BOB ANDERSON PLAYS ON THE KENT DOUBLES BOARD!

On 7th April, Bob Anderson, the 1988 World Darts Champion, posted on the *Darts from the Past* Facebook page:

I played on the Kent Board at the Tovil Club in Maidstone on 5th April gave an exhibition and presented the prizes for the Maidstone Doubles Darts League. What an experience!! The board is lower, the oche is further back, and the colours and trebles are missing!!!! No 25 either, just a tiny bullseye. Hard work, fun, and I think it will make the doubles (and trebles) on the normal board seem like buckets when I play in the World Seniors Masters in May. (Photo © Bob Anderson. Used with permission.)



Bob told me, "This show was 30 months in the making, as it was originally planned for April 2020."

DARTS IN EUROPE

Wing Commander James R. King RAF (Retired), President of the Europe Ex-Pats Darts Federation wrote from Cascais, Marbella, Spain.

Dear Patrick,

Several weeks ago we had the pleasure of the return visit of Eddie Norman, roving darts ambassador on his World Diamond Darts Tour. We collected Eddie as he flew into Gibraltar Airport (smiling as always as he came through).



I am dropping you a line to say 'thank you' from our members here in Spain who attended Eddie's lecture for allowing him to use extracts from your wonderful Doctor Darts News to educate us on the history of darts and Eddie assured us that he mentioned he was not the author but yourself assisted by your dear wife who proof reads.

Eddie has organised several tournaments for us here in Spain where I have lived for over thirty years. Eddie's genius in organising the sport of darts for many of us ex-pats has been amazing, his genius in lecturing on and organising the sport of darts is such that it is not a question of where he stands in the pantheon of darts organisers but where he sits amongst the great organisers of all sport.

Eddie is never a front of house guy, but then he does not need to be. The darts championships and darts organisations that he has founded go on to generate themselves rather like interest accruing on a billionaire's bank account.

We here have gratefully received your Doctor Darts News e-mailed to us each month for several years from Eddie and these have been forwarded to members in Portugal, Italy, France and other countries. We do love receiving the magazine.

In 1972 I was an RAF officer serving in Gibraltar and we were contacted by Jack Price [pictured right] of Bristol, who was traveller organiser for the West of England Darts Organisation and Ken Nicholas who was their treasurer.

They were bringing their West of England team to Gibraltar to play Gibraltar and wondered if I could arrange an RAF match also to play the team. To say we were excited for their visit was an understatement.

We were delighted to do so, we had never played a match before, and I asked for instructions to arrange the set up. They told me that Eddie Norman was bringing in a new 7ft 9¼ inch throwing line and, also, we had to have what was to be called an 'oche' line for throwing behind. This we religiously did.



When the team came, we played off the 'Oche' and the new throwing line introduced as did the match against the Gibraltar national team the following day.



In 1973, Joe Goldwin, Gibraltar Darts President was contacted by the newly founded British Darts Organisation in London who said the throwing line was called "Toe the Hockey" not 'Oche' and darts was not being played from 7ft 9¼ inches and there was no plans to change it. In 1974 the West of England visited us again.

I was posted in 1975 off the Rock and was surprised when years later I hear the term now in general use 'Toe The Oche' and darts throwing line is now 7ft 9¼ inches.

Strange what comes round goes round.

There are certain organisers in the Sport of Darts at such a completely different level that even professionals will look and think how on earth did he just do that and Eddie Norman is one of them.

Patrick...we thank you most sincerely for your wonderful unique contribution to the history of darts and allowing Eddie to educate us with you magazines.

With our kindest regards, James.

I replied as follows:

Dear James,

Thank you so much for your fascinating email relating to my darts newsletter and the visit of Eddie Norman.

I am very pleased that you enjoy the newsletter and that Eddie is able to use the information I provide in his lectures. Without Eddie and his worldwide travels my newsletter would never have reached a global audience. As you probably know the newsletter (DDN) is only available by subscription or by subscribers, like Eddie and many others, forwarding it to people like yourself who we know would be genuinely interested in it. That way DDN stays available only to those genuinely interested in the game.

If at any time any of your contacts would prefer to receive DDN direct from me, please just let me know and I'll add them to the list.

As regards 'toe the hockey' and the 7' 9¼ throwing distance, Eddie was ahead of his time. It was the World Darts Federation (WDF) that came up with that throwing distance which, as you know, is now global. The phrase 'toe the hockey' was used by the News of the World tournament for many, many years but once the BDO was into its stride, their main man Olly Croft, decided to change the word to 'oche' instead of 'hockey'. (Search the word 'oche' on website www.patrickchaplin.com which explains why.)

Thank you too for the very helpful information about those early days of 'modern darts' in Gibraltar and elsewhere.

Best wishes James and please pass on my regards to all of your friends in darts.

A 'LOCAL' DARTS CARTOON.

In past issues of *DDN* I have published cartoons or caricatures of famous darts players such as Jim Pike and Joe Hitchcock but this is the first time (I think) I have presented a truly *local* darts cartoon.

Darts player Dave Bassett, presented this cartoon to members of the Darts from the Past Facebook page on 19th March. He told members

'Might be of interest to some people. Mum found in dad's things. I think it's local league Duchess of Edinburgh at Welling v the Plough and Harrow with both my Dad and Grandad playing...I recognise Cyril Monk. He used to cut me and my brothers' hair when we were kids. Might be early seventies.'



I believe this cartoon is of interest to *all* darts players. It reflects the style that appeared in the *News of the World* in its heyday and must be preserved. The cartoon had suffered some folding and creasing whilst up in that loft. Thus, I am extremely thankful to David King of Darts501.com for making it presentable.

MY RESEARCH IS SPONSORED BY

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