

DARTS HISTORY

(Aka Dr. Darts' Newsletter)

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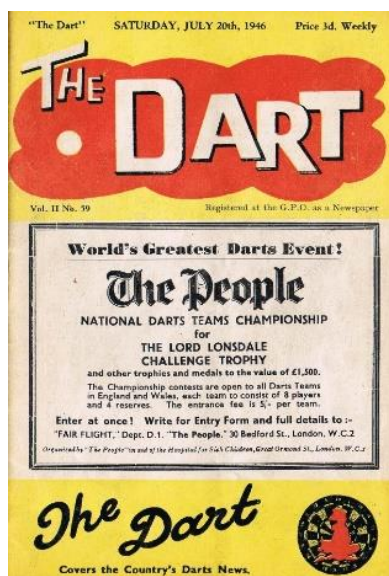


DARTS WORLD – HAPPY 50th BIRTHDAY!

When *Darts World* appeared in November 1972 it was the first dart magazine to appear in the UK since 1952.

The editor then, and until 2009, was Tony Wood but, in the beginning, thirty-five years earlier, there was the *Darts Weekly News*. The *DWN* had been introduced in 1937 not because the working classes darts-playing men (and women) demanded it but because the upper class had taken up the game following HM the Queen Mother and the King had played a single game in a new community centre in Slough, Berkshire in 1936 which was reported widely in both local and national newspapers and the posh folks wanted to learn more. Darts became a 'fad'.

A major contributor to *DWN* was a man named Rupert Croft-Cooke who, in December 1936, had published a small volume titled *Darts*, the first book entirely devoted to the game. *DWN* survived less than two years with Croft-Cooke revealing many years later that, when *DWN* suddenly closed, he found himself out of pocket (not unlike I was many years later by another failed darts publication).



After the Second World War, in 1945, an entrepreneur, Frank Wolfe, began a small darts newspaper titled *The Dart* which heralded the work of the St. Dunstan's Four, captained by one of, if not *the*, top dart players of the time, Joe Hitchcock. Joe was renowned for his rivalry with south Londoner Jim Pike and the *News of the World* Team of Dart Champions. *The Dart* ceased publication in 1950 at which time it was, ironically, bought out by Jim Pike. It was relaunched as *Scoreboard* but with a title like that it was never going to be noticed or picked up by darts enthusiasts and soon failed.

In 1952, *The People* Sunday newspaper became involved with the recently-formed National Darts Association of Great Britain (NDAGB) to re-promote its Lord Lonsdale Team Darts Championship. In order to promote its news and rules, with *The Dart* no longer published, *The People* introduced

Darts News. It is unclear how long this publication lasted but it seems to have survived for only a few issues.

From that time, no darts magazines appeared on the newsstands although, of course, the *News of the World* continued to promote and report on its famous Individual Darts Championship through the columns of its own newspaper until the London-based competition ceased in 1990.

So, effectively, darts was magazine-less for 20 years.

Then, in the early 1970s, darts was brought to the attention of major TV when the *News of the World* Individual Champion Final was televised on *World of Sport*. Darts was being really noticed and TV was the key. It was not long until the idea of a national darts magazine was mooted and *Darts World* appeared.

The first issue of *Darts World* was published dated November/December 1972 and was met by an eager darts public. The editor, Croydon-based Tony Wood (pictured), told his readers that

“Even before this issue was off the press the reaction to our arrival had been overwhelming”.



Indeed, what started as a bi-monthly magazine, in just one month, the announcement was made that it was ‘Now on Sale every month.’

Initial topics covered included the evidence of the growing popularity of darts ‘as a competitive sport’, the dedicated men and women who organised the game, the fragmentation of the leagues and associations, professionalism versus the amateur game, the ladies’ game, the shape and sizes of dartboards and the threat to the game itself from some brewers ‘who mistakenly assume that a public house without a dartboard is the only way to make money’. The lead article was written by John Ross, Chairman of the NDAGB, titled ‘My ambitions for the future’. (No mention of the BDO at that time.)

The popularity of *Darts World* led to numerous other magazines springing up over the following five decades, some national and many others of a local nature, including *Shanghai*, *The Arrow* and *Northern Darts News* all spreading the gospel of darts but not one having the success of *Darts World*. All are now lost to history.

On the international darts magazine scene *Dart World* (Anaheim, California) was first issued in August 1972, three months before the UK *Darts World*, but the ones that started in the 1980s and stayed available for many years were *International Spider*, *Double Eagle* and *Bulls Eye News (BEN)*. The most unusual name for any USA darts magazine I have in my collection is from Dallas, Texas, launched in the late 1970s, titled *Darts Dope*. (I first mentioned *Darts Dope* back in *DDN* #66 (December 2015).





During the 1980s more darts magazines appeared across the world including, for example, Canada (*Darts News* and *Darts Canada*), Holland (*Darts4You*), Belgium (*Belgium Darts*), Norway (*daRts*), Finland (*Darts*), Czech Republic (*Sipkovy Sport*), Germany (*Dart Echo*) (pictured), Australia (*Points and Tips*) plus many more.

I think it is likely that at least some of these international magazines were directly influenced by our *Darts World*.

What was clear was that the support for *Darts World*, achieved in less than five years, led Tony Wood, on Friday 17th June 1977, to launch a sister publication, titled *Darts News*, 'Britain's first fortnightly darts newspaper'. Tony confirmed that his new publication incorporated *Double Top*, a rival newspaper which had been first published (under editor Mike Williams and editorial executive Roger St. Pierre) in August 1976. Issue One of *Darts News* led with the headline 'Greatest Darts Show on Earth' which announced the WINMAU World Masters then being planned for the forthcoming December.

Darts News was to supplement *Darts World*, Tony writing

"So why has Darts News arrived on the scene?"

It is our aim to reach the hundreds of thousands of local leagues and competition players whose main contribution to the game so far has been the enjoyment of it.

As a newspaper we can provide players with the up-to-date information they need to take advantage of the busy darts scene that is going on all around them today.

We shall be encouraging them to compete and take part in the wider world of darts that is still developing rapidly.

Today, there are approximately 20,000 super league darts players. Just how many more players worthy of county or super league status there might be in this country is anybody's guess. We want them to have that opportunity. This newspaper, then, is about you. And we would very much like to have your help to ensure that we do the job well.

Please keep us information of news in your area; let us know your views on important – and the not so important – matters affecting darts. We in our turn will do our best to keep you in the picture by providing the information you want to know.

In issue #20 (Friday 19th May, 1978) the title of *Darts News* lost 'and Double Top' and gained 'and Pub Sports Monthly' as the newspaper was to include the wide range of other sports played in Britain's pubs and clubs, including pool. Despite this expansion to 20 pages,



Darts News ceased on Friday 15th September 1978, with issue #24. At that time Tony announced that the newspaper would merge with *Darts World* which would, he wrote

...enable us to overcome certain production and distribution problems and offer the darts-playing public an enlarged magazine which is even better value.

Darts World kept its global readers aware of everything happening in darts, with Tony at the helm, until July 2009. After producing 440 issues of the magazine, he had decided to retire and hand on the baton to someone else in the ever-growing digital age.

Later the responsibility fell into the hands of today's Managing Editor, Callum J. Harris-Hulme and what an excellent job he and his team are doing. Long may *Darts World*, Callum, his team and contributors continue to entertain and inform darts fans across the globe. This month records the 50th birthday for *Darts World*. Long may it continue.

MARK WEBSTER

In response to #152, subscriber Ben Sheppard wrote

Patrick. Thank you for November Darts History a brilliant read as always. The Mark Webster article was superb and a really great read. I do like Mark commentating; a very knowledgeable person on darts.

And Doug Haney from Nova Scotia writes

Your article on Mark Webster [in #152] was outstanding. The work he put in to become such a world class dart player was a testament to his devotion to the game. To learn a trade play darts and travel and become the world class dart player he became not only proves he was a champion of the game, but it shows if you want something bad enough your goals are within reach if you go out and give it your best effort. Another excellent article!



Thanks Ben and Doug but I can't claim your praise for that article as it was written and submitted to *DH/DDN* by Ian Flack, the former Sales Director of WINMAU – now Head of Sales at Monarch Water.

The image of Mark (above, © WINMAU Dartboard Company), was issued in August 2007 in a press release announcing that Mark 'Darts hottest young talent joins WINMAU.' Back 25 years ago, at the age of 23, Mark signed a three-year sponsorship deal with WINMAU. At that time was the current World Darts Federation (WDF) Number One ranked player.

Described by the company as 'a passionate, level-headed dart player who has shown...that he can stand up to the toughest situations both on and off the oche without losing his head' At that time Mark said

"I am really excited to be joining WINMAU. It is such a legendary company; you can't escape the history and reputation they have in World Darts and I'm really looking forward to being part of the WINMAU team."

Mark joined the team that included ten '10 times World Champion teammates', Andy Fordham, Dennis Priestley and Trina Gulliver, all of whom agreed that Mark 'has the skill, temperament and passion to become one of the greatest darts players in the world.'

Mark certainly proved he has been 'great value' and remains sponsored by WINMAU today.

AUSTRALIAN LEGENDS

Bob Weaver from New South Wales, Australia recently wrote:

*Hello Patrick. Hope this email finds you well.
Last night we had the honor of having
George Foster and his lovely wife Vicki
as guests of honor at our 2022 Australian
Championships Presentation dinner.
(Image below (© Mopsnapz) shows
George having a beer with PC at John
Lowe's 65 birthday, a few years ago...)*

*George asked if I had informed you of
our Association and how it is run, hence
this email is to give you an insight to the
Legends Darts here in Australia. There is
more information on the website as to its
inception till now
australianlegends.com.au but I will give you the quick version.*



Australian Darts Legends currently consists of four state teams Western Australia, Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales. This is open to all dart players over the age of 45. Each state run their own monthly meetings and get together the last week in October each year for the National Championships. These are referred to as the Friendship Games, due to the fact the friendships form through the game of darts. Each year the championships are held in a different state with this year's being hosted by New South Wales.

In New South Wales we have a local leagues club on the Central Coast that has sponsored our championships since its inception. The Central Coast Leagues Club has supplied the venue each time at no cost to the association and assisted in the funding each time. This is the first time we have been able to hold the championships since the onset of the pandemic. Prior

to Covid we would host 450 – 500 players in rooms over 3 levels of the club. This year we have approximately 275 players from the 4 states compete in divisions from Premier to Division 4.

We hope to rebuild to pre-pandemic levels with the talks of South Australian joining and Queensland returning next year when we play in Bunbury Western Australia. Thank you for taking the time to read my email. Yours in Darts. Bob Weaver.

RONDART EXHIBITION

In response to the RONDART piece in the November issue Thomas (aka dartsweb) wrote

I should be there over Christmas time; in which case I'll get a chance to nip over. Yes. I read an article in which the future of the exhibit was discussed. Who knows indeed, it's great that the work has been done by yourself and others anyway to memorialise this unique part of darts history.

Thanks Thomas. If you make it, please send us your thoughts.

SHANGHAI

It's been a while since my name has been mentioned in a darts commentary, so I was surprised when Chris Mason mentioned me during the Cazoo Players Championship at Minehead at the end of November. Chris was chatting about the meaning of 'shanghai' and there was some doubt: then he mentioned me, my research and my books.

Just in case Chris needed the full story, I extracted my definition of 'shanghai' from my book *180! – Fascinating Darts Facts* and sent the following to him:

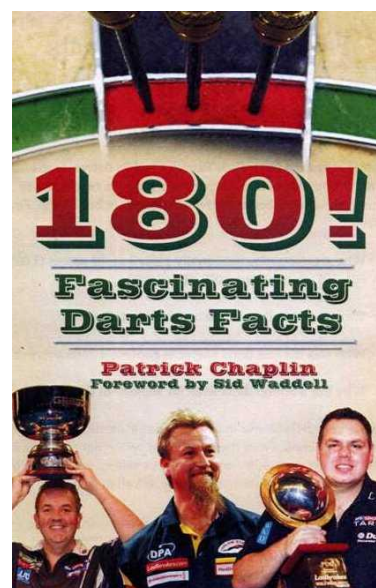
Shanghai

The word 'shanghai' comes from nautical slang and means 'to drug of otherwise render insensible, and ship on board a vessel wanting hands.' Nowadays, in a general sense 'shanghai'ed' means anything that has interrupted someone's actions or train of thought, for example "The boss then shanghai'ed the meeting and talked about nothing but himself for the rest of the morning."

In the darts sense it means that, by hitting single, double and treble with one turn of three darts, you have effectively 'shanghai'ed' the rest of the players out of the game - something none of them wanted to happen.

I also added that shanghai, on *any* number only wins the game if agreed beforehand and, of course, it never counts in a top game but is great to see it being hit on the twenties.

By the way, *180! – Fascinating Darts Facts* is still available from The History Press and would make a great Christmas present!

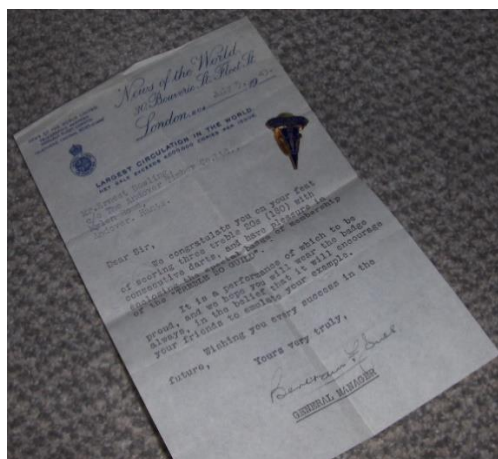


NEWS OF THE WORLD – TREBLE 20 GUILD – ERNEST DOWLING

A couple of weeks ago, I received the following enquiry from a lady named Ann Buckley.

I have found a letter from News of the World dated July 5, 1943, with a badge which was given to my grandfather. I wonder if the letter and badge have any value, do you know?

As you all know, I do not give valuations but, as this was a letter from the *News of the World* and a Treble Twenty Badge, I decided to pursue it further. Due to the poor quality of the image, I transcribe the letter addressed to Mr. Ernest Dowling, c/o The Andover Timber Co. Ltd., Mylen Road, Andover, Hants (*Hampshire*) in full:



Dear Sir, We congratulate you on your feat of scoring three treble 20s (180) with consecutive darts, and have pleasure in enclosing the special badge of membership of the "Treble 20 Guild."

It is a performance of which to be proud, and we hope you will wear the badge always, in the belief that it will encourage your friends to emulate your example.

Wishing you every success in the future, Yours very truly, Bertram F. Jones, General Manager

Ann provided me with this additional information about the recipient:

Ernest Dowling was my grandad and the letter is addressed to him at Andover Timber Co. Ltd. where he worked until his retirement. When he retired he went to work for the person who owned the company in his garden and looked after the large garden at his very nice house until not long before he passed away. It will be very nice to know how much it is worth but I suppose I do doubt whether it will be more than the sentimental value is worth to me!

I replied to Ann

As the actual News of the World Individual championship ceased in 1939 when war broke out and didn't return until 1948. Despite that, the News of the World continued to recognise good darts performances and in your grandfather's case he was awarded a Treble 20 badge for scoring 180 with three consecutive darts. [It is unclear which version of the badge accompanied the letter but it looks like the design shown here, right.]

Given that the letter is addressed to him at his place of work, I am sure that he achieved his '180' there. Someone from Andover Timber would have written to the News of the World in order to verify Ernest's achievement and support his application. The badge looks in excellent condition but to me the letter is the most interesting item. It is common to see the badges online for sale but few are accompanied by a letter.



As for value, I cannot put a figure on it because the market changes so quickly. In any event the two items together would not be a fortune. If you wanted to sell them, then one of the main auction sites would be the best but look on line first to see what similar items are meaning offered for sale. That should give you a good idea of what you should add to allow for the letter. However, I note what you said about the items being more of sentimental value to you and, of course, appreciate that being the case.

After replying to Ann Buckley, I consulted one of my key *News of the World* contacts, Chris Lovell, who told me:

Patrick. The Market is up and down but the value of the letter and badge would of course depend on condition of both. I would think £40-£60 but anything can happen if put to auction and, of course if it was awarded to a known player of the time, it could add further value.

Thanks Chris.

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

Despite numerous false starts during 2022, I have failed to deliver the promised article relating to Paxman Darts for subscriber Neil Westgate and his dad, my New Year's Resolution for 2023 is to produce it. In the meantime, here is Paxman's Christmas message from *Darts World* from 1975.



I appreciate that not everyone celebrates Christmas but this is to wish you *all* the very best at this time of year from Maureen (my 'research assistant') and me.

MY RESEARCH IS SPONSORED BY

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