

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 18 SEPTEMBER 2011



Greetings global subscribers!

I'm still trying to come to terms with the fact that I seem to be making some progress in putting *DDN* together myself. It's early days yet and I'm bound to mess up somewhere along the line but let's hope it doesn't scare anyone away. Please bear with me during this short transitional period.

I offer my sincere thanks to Justin from Gibraltar who e-mailed me immediately after I had issued *DDN* #17. He wrote, "Sorry to hear you are having web troubles lately. If there is anything I can do to assist then please let me know. Your work as a darts historian is invaluable to those who have a keen interest in preserving history." Justin then offered to temporarily host my website while I sought a new webmaster. Justin, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for offering to step into the breach. However, fortunately, one was found quickly and I am grateful to Sean for taking on board 'Dr. Darts'.

In this month's issue I've a few follow-up pieces...

(a) Car Registration Numbers

Top darter Scott 'Scotty Dog' Mitchell responded to the car registration piece in *DDN* #17. He said, "Looking at the number plate section that gives me the idea that maybe you should do a feature about players' or officials' number plates now. There must be a few." Scott has his own personalised plate. He told me, "My reg number is SM53 DOG. And - Would you believe it? I was bought it by my wife for **one hundred and eighty pounds**. You can't write this kinda stuff mate but it's true. That's why she bought it." Here's Scott with his car and special reg number.



There must be other darts-related personalised car number out there. I've already mentioned those belonging to Keith Deller, John Lowe and me but let's hear from you. Contact me via my website.

(b) Stan Allen – Elm Dartboard maker

Stan Allen's story was the main feature of Issue 17 and a shorter version had appeared in the *Oxford Mail* earlier this year. As a result of the latter I received an e-mail from Edwin 'Eamonn' W. who was born and raised in Oxford. For Edwin, Stan's story brought back happy memories of his own darts career.

He told me, "I had from a very young age been interested in darts as the holes around the kitchen door, where the dartboard hung at home, would attest! During the early 1970s I started playing competitive pub darts. I played mainly for the Coach & Horses, St. Clements. Monday night was Headington & District, Tuesday Oxford & District, Wednesday Kidlington & District in which I played for the Red Lion Old Marston. Stan Allen was a well-known name in the darting world although I never met him.

In those days all boards were made of seasoned elm and the way they were cared for was a mark of a Landlord's respect for the game. Soaking and turning the scoring ring ensured the longevity of the board and even wear. The Landlord of the "Coach" was a very kind man named Ken Coggings, no mean player himself. My team mates were all quite a few years older than me and although my youthful brashness no doubt annoyed them we got on really well. We were a real team."



Back to the Elm Boards...

"Ken quite rightly prided himself on the match boards presented for Mondays and Tuesdays, always top notch.

When I was playing I couldn't bear having any chalk on my fingers and between throws would often lick the tip of middle, index finger and thumb. One night Ken took me to one side and said something along the following lines:

"Eamonn, I have noticed that you lick your fingers between throws; not a good idea. I asked why and Ken said that when a board was resting he would place it in a half barrel of water which was stood outside the back door. This barrel was a few feet from the Gent's outside toilet and if there was a queue a few would relieve themselves in the barrel!

From then on I would have a wet cloth or bar towel with me."

The good news is that Eamonn suffered no ill effects!

(The image shows young Malcolm Worthington preparing an elm board at Stan Allen's workshop in the 1950s.)

(c) Darts enquiries...More care needed...

As you all know, you can ask 'Dr. Darts' anything related to our sport and I will do my best to provide an appropriate response. However, recently I received a very interesting query but there's no way I can assist.

'Katie B' sent me a message via my website. She wrote:

'I have a question that I am hoping you could assist me with? I am doing research on dartboards to get as much historical accuracy for a project that I am currently working on. I need to either acquire, or fabricate a late 19th Century dartboard that would have been seen in a tavern.

I have read your dartboard history, and I find it fascinating! I want to make sure that the needed dartboard is as accurate as possible, and since you are very knowledgeable, I hope that you might be able to point me in the right direction.

I sincerely appreciate your assistance, and I look forward to hearing back from you soon.

It ends 'With gratitude, Katie B.'

I would have loved to have helped her and I know I can but *she didn't enter your e-mail address on the form!* Katie (as is her prerogative) decided not to enter her address, simply stating 'UK' so I cannot even track her down from there.

I checked with my then webmaster to see if there was anything he could do to retrieve any other data and he said that was impossible. This was the first time that such a thing had happened and so to ensure we receive the right data in future the e-mail enquiry form has been changed to include the *compulsory* entry of the enquirer's e-mail.

Although I cannot help Katie B this will ensure that all other enquiries will include e-mail contact details.



However, Katie's enquiry does give me a excuse to publish the earliest darts photograph discovered so far, that of the 'famous' Grimsby 'Dogger Bank No. 1. Team and their unique dartboard. This is just one of the images I would have sent Katie if only...

WHY IS THE OCHE/THROW LINE SET AT 7' 9 ¼" (2.37m)?

Talking of general enquiries received via my website, the most common questions are found to be 'Who invented the numbering sequence on a modern dartboard?' (which I'll leave for another day) and 'Why is the oche/throw line set at 7' 9 ¼" (2.37m)?' which I will deal with in this issue.

Neil W is the latest enquirer. He wrote, "Patrick, why 7 ft 9¼ in? It's even weirder than the standard railway gauge, mythically linked to Roman chariot wheels!"

Well, as I said to Neil, I know very little about railways but I can definitely help with the darts side of things. I replied,

"When I started out researching darts 25 years ago the reason given for 7' 9 ¼ " was that when the British Darts Organisation (BDO) were setting up their first set of rules they didn't want to use the *News of the World* throwing length (8') or the National Darts Association of Great Britain (NDAGB) oche length (7'6") so they decided on a happy medium (7'9").

However, this did not translate exactly into metric (which was a bit of a craze at the time) so they added the extra quarter of an inch because that DID translate into metric at exactly 2.37m." I was happy with this explanation and was so confident that I was right and it all made sense until I put this theory on to the Unicorn blog. Almost immediately a guy came back to me saying that I was wrong - and I was. He told me that 7' 9 ¼" represented 2.3747565635m.



So I had to look for another answer.

Thanks to an international darts contact who was there at the time I now know that the 'new' oche length was agreed by the World Darts Federation (WDF) in 1977 when it was setting up its global rules for the sport of darts. Apparently there was nothing scientific about it. According to my very reliable source within the WDF, during the discussions about oche length a delegate merely suggested 7' 9 ¼ " and on a show of hands that was that.

And there was me thinking...

After revealing this to Neil W he replied, "Thanks very much Patrick. That's a wonderful story for me to tell to distract attention from my playing."

Neil's question also gave me an excuse to publish an image of ex- England International Doug McCarthy at the oche back in the 1980s. (I'll have more to say about Doug in a future issue of *DDN*.) (Image © PC/DW Archive)

DR. DARTS FEATURED IN *THE GUARDIAN*

Many years ago, when I was embarking on my PhD, some of the UK national press picked up it which led me to be dubbed an 'arrers nut' by *The Sun* and 'an eccentric' by *The Guardian*.

Several years on I was recently asked to respond to an online request to *The Guardian* relating to the fate of pub games. The article, 'Pub games – the lifeblood of the English pub?' appeared online at

www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/aug/29/pub-games-closures

Whilst it is a general piece on pub games and the value of those recreations in possibly helping to stem the number of pub closures, I do of course mention darts and hope it will be of interest to you.

On the general issue of pub games, I am hoping to add more pub games-related pieces to my website in the not-too-distant future.

CAN YOU HELP WAZZA?

A good friend of mine and one of my Australian subscribers, Warren 'Wazza' Ackary (pictured on following page) has been mentioned in earlier issues of *DDN*. However, on this occasion he is asking for our help in finding some Unicorn darts and cases for his ever-growing collection of darts memorabilia; items which have, to date eluded him. Here's Wazza...

"Hi All,

Many of you may know me via my site <http://www.wazzasworldofdarts.com> and if you have you will have seen that I have my own way of telling the history of darts via players and the darts they used as well as many items of memorabilia!

What we took for granted in the 70's, 80's and early 90's with products on the market are something we must grasp with both hands now and not let go. Why you ask? Because the items I am about to mention are *historical*. It may not seem that way to most but when someone emails me and asks about an item in my archives, I can give them the user, company, what the player and company did at that time, as well as championships played (Embassy, now Lakeside, etc) and much more information!

At the moment I am trying to find Unicorn 'Golden Signature' darts; Dave Whitcombe, Keith Deller, Bob Anderson, Paul Lim, Mike Gregory and John Lowe all circa 1990. (Please note that you will see a set of Bob Anderson darts in my collection but unfortunately they are not from that era. They are from the 2010 range.)

The cases that came with them are also hard to find. The reason I am trying to find these cases is that every time I buy a set of Unicorn barrels from that era I like to make them complete by placing the darts in a case that belonged in that time.

If you can help, please drop me a line at wazza501@gmail.com. I thank you for your time fellow *DDN* readers, enjoy and happy darting!"

I've never really considered a 'Help Line' feature before so I'm trying Wazza's request just as a 'toe in the water' to see what reaction it receives. Let's hope *DDN* readers can help him. I've asked Wazza to let me know.



Finally, if you would like to see what darts and related memorabilia Wazza has in his collection then please go to his website (link above), visit the memorabilia link on the top menu, the drop-down will have all the

categories of items. If you have something to add or ask Wazza about then add and ask away!

Of the image of himself on his holidays in Thailand Wazza told me “I did take a few shots of a dartboard at David Brooks’ Island Lager bar and signed my name on his wall.” David, a good friend of three-times World Professional Darts Champion, John Lowe, used to be Chief Executive Officer of the Federation Brewery here in the UK. He is now enjoying retirement in Patong.

HELP FOR THE GUYS IN AFGHANISTAN

I was absolutely thrilled to be contacted for the very first time by a member of the UK armed forces stationed in Afghanistan. We all realise how difficult life is out there but it is pleasing to know that a goodly number still find time to enjoy a game of darts even in a key theatre of war.

Sgt. Les. M. wrote:

‘Dear Sir,

We have a darts argument here in Afghanistan where we are based. Could you please tell us, did a Charlie Ellix or Ellis win the first two British Open Individual Darts Championships and were these run independent of the British Darts Association? If he did win, where did these two British Opens take place? Was it in London or Manchester?

This popped up in a sports quiz here, and a lot rests on the answer. Someone's round at the bar!! Thank You Sir,

I must admit that I did have to scratch my head a little and undertake some research to discover the facts but here is my full response to Sgt. Les M.

‘There has been more than one ‘British Open’.

The first British Open organised by the British Darts Organisation (BDO) was held at the Mount Royal and Europa Hotels in London on 28th and 29th December 1974 (although this is shown in the records as ‘1975’). The winner was Alan Evans (Wales) and the runner-up was England’s Alan Glazier.

The second British Open was held at the same venue in London on 3rd and 4th January 1976 and on this occasion Jack North (a joiner from Burnley who had won the National Darts Association Men's Individual title in 1975). The runner-up was Birmingham and England's Brian Vaux.

However, before that the NODOR company ran their own British Open and Charlie – WAIT FOR IT! – **ELLIX** won the title in its first two years (1974 and 1975).'

I later discovered that the NODOR British Opens took place in Bristol.

Sgt. Les M. thanked me providing the answer and then confirmed that the £50 bet, which was originally going 'over the bar' in the mess room, was actually donated to charity.



Here's an image of Charlie Ellix in action. (Image © Charles R. Cramp, courtesy of DW Archive)

Charlie Ellix's name was also mentioned to me in an e-mail via my website from John D. from Enfield who told me that he [played darts with Eric Bristow in Stoke Newington when he was 17 years old](#). John said, "[We did all the local circuits together, but the best dart player I have ever seen was Charlie Ellix. I was there at the General Picton pub in London N1 when he](#)

[played](#) against [Billy Lennard](#). [He scored seven 140s on the spin. I actually marked the board. I think this is in the Guinness Book of Records. Please confirm.](#)"

I checked my records but found no reference of the feat in either the *Guinness Book of Records* (2010) or the *Guinness Book of Darts* (1981) but of course not every record is published in the *Guinness Book of Records*. Details of Charlie's extraordinary achievement may well lie in the publishers' archives.

However, in the *Guinness Book of Darts* author Derek Brown provides a short biography of Charlie Ellix and also mentions that on 29th April 1977 Charlie hit a record-breaking 79-dart 3001 at the Victoria Hotel, St. Anns Road, Tottenham against Bill Lennard.

John Lowe was there and witnessed the feat. Another witness was landlord Jim Mangan; a leading London darts official. Lennard said afterwards, "Charlie was absolutely unbelievable that night." Ellix's average per dart was 37.987 whilst Lennard's was 37.049! (Who says the darters of yesterday wouldn't keep up with Taylor???)

Ellix beat the previous record of 81 darts set by another darting great, Leighton Rees on 5 April 1976. I do not know if Charlie's record has been broken by anyone else more recently. Perhaps *you* can help clarify this.

AND FINALLY...

On 10th July 2011 the very last issue of the *News of the World* was published, issue number 8,674. The newspaper was first published 168 years ago and in 1927 set up the *News of the World* individual darts 'test' which initially ran in the Metropolitan Area of London but eventually became national and then international before being 'suspended' in 1990, resurrected for one season in 1997 and now it has gone forever. I will be writing more about this great tournament in a future *DDN* but in the meantime a brief history can be found on my website www.patrickchaplin.com.

Sadly I have now been informed that darts fans have been dealt another blow. Steve Faragher of Faragher Jones Ltd., the company which published *Darts! Monthly* (the successor to *We Love Darts*) has written to me (and doubtless many other contributors, etc) saying that 'It is with great regret that the board and directors of Faragher Jones Ltd has taken the decision to cease trading as of today, 1st September 2011. Despite our best efforts we have been defeated by a combination of bad debts and the difficult economic

climate. We are deeply sorry for the pain this announcement will cause many of our suppliers, and also to the subscribers and readers of our magazines.

We expect liquidators to be appointed in the very near future.'

I will now join my place in the queue for money owed but I guess...

So *We Love Darts/Darts! Monthly* bites the dust, following in the path of other darts magazines and newspapers including *Darts and Sports Weekly News*, *The Dart*, *Shanghai*, *Darts International*, *Darts Northern News* and *The Arrow*.

In the UK only *Darts World* (est. 1972) remains. Let's hope we can confidently look forward to a bumper 40th Anniversary Issue in 2012!

COMING UP IN ISSUE 19

The October issue will include Darryl Hallam, dartboard collector extraordinaire plus a word or two about one of the greatest left-handed players ever to toss tungsten, Alan Glazier. I also hope to have mastered the art of resizing images by then!

Until next time...

Cheers!

PATRICK

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