

DARTS HISTORY

(formerly *Dr. Darts' Newsletter*)

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ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF DARTS ORGANISATION THE NATIONAL DARTS ASSOCIATION – PART TWO

Thanks to everyone who provided feedback on Part One of 'One hundred years...' (*Darts History* #179 (February 2025)), especially those who were looking forward to Part Two.

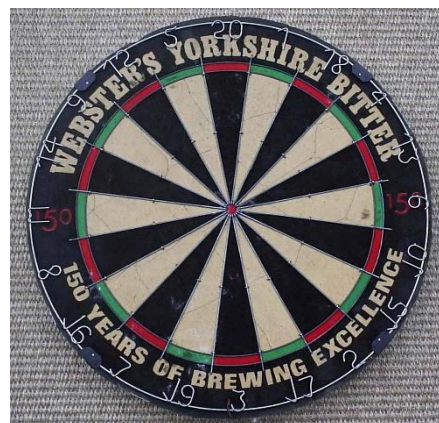
You need wait no longer.

Part One left us considering what would happen at the February 1925 meeting of the newly established 'Central Darts Association.' From the very beginning it was realised that there was more to setting up the Association than simply appointing and encouraging a team of experienced organisers.

At the February meeting all twenty-four delegates, all darts league representatives and in all probability either darts club secretaries or licensees; in other words, people working at grass roots level, playing in or organising darts leagues, or representing the interests of specific brewers. It is likely that their motivation for being there was not restricted to a general interest in promoting the game of darts *per se*; more likely to hear how best to organise a game that would bring more people through the pub doors as all around alternative leisure options were affecting the pub trade.

An examination of the list of delegates published in the *Morning Advertiser* at the time showed the geographical spread of the representatives to be very narrow indeed; limited to London and the south-east. The furthest any representative had travelled was from Grays in Essex less than twenty miles away. But it was short notice indeed.

The invitation was only formally issued to the readership of the *Morning Advertiser* on 10 February and it was thus more or less impractical for anyone else to organise themselves to travel to London at two days' notice, particularly on a weekday. As we shall see later, this restricted representation was to cause the NDA major problems in the future as it tried to impose the London treble dartboard and London rules on, for example, those dart players who were accustomed to the Yorkshire Board (no trebles or outer bullseye (25) (Modern example shown right. My archive)) or some players in Manchester, who competed on a completely different design and size of dartboard and played according to different rules.



W. T. Mycroft, Chairman of the Surbiton and the Dittons Darts League, one of the earliest darts leagues to be formed, presided at the meeting. Mycroft stated in his introductory address

that he had ‘done his best to father the game,’ expressed his great pleasure at the large attendance and anticipated ‘a big success.’

This form of words used by Mycroft, taking credit for ‘fathering’ the game, is significant and is a claim that does not appear to have been openly challenged for any reason. Therefore, it is *possible* that Mycroft was the first person involved in darts to realise the full potential of the game. The only place he could have become convinced of the potential of organised darts would have been through the league of which he was Chairman. If darts had been successfully organised in the Surbiton and the Dittons League, providing benefits for customers, licensees, and brewers alike, there would be little reason to believe that such benefits could not accrue nationally. It can be no coincidence that John Peel, who for months had been strongly advocating standardisation of the game, was also Honorary Secretary of the same league of which Mycroft was Chairman.

To further support this supposition, in 1923 the Surbiton and the Dittons Darts League had brought a highly successful season to a close and would hold a meeting, in August that year, to revise its rules. Mycroft and Peel would have been active participants in that process and were, therefore, able to bring their experience from the leagues to bear when drafting the initial rules of, what was to become known as the National Darts Association (NDA). Later, together, these two men would be elected to key positions on the NDA and take responsibility not only for rationalising and standardising the game of darts but also for promoting the NDA rules across the country.

At the inaugural meeting in February 1925, Peel presented his report and hoped that all had attended in ‘a conciliatory spirit, determined, if possible, by a sporting spirit of give and take to come to conclusions which will remove the present anomaly of different rules for different competitions.’ Despite different rules being key to the opening statement of his report, Peel identified the main objects of an English darts association as protecting the game from the attacks of ‘fanatics’ (another word for ‘others’ : fanatics who, as far as I have been able to be determined, had not up to that point in time launched any attack on darts) and to control the game in such a manner as to make it ‘free from the taint of gambling, and a pure, clean, and skilful sport worthy to rank with any other.’

At the meeting Peel reminded delegates of two recent cases where certain police reports had been made about the game, ‘obviously of a prejudicial nature.’ However, he added that, in the main, nothing detrimental had been reported to the various Brewster sessions. On the contrary, Peel commented that the general authoritative opinion was that the conduct of licensed premises had vastly improved over recent years; ‘This,’ he said, ‘in a year when the game [*of darts*] has grown out of all knowledge is eminently satisfactory.’

Thus, the main thrust - the primary reason - for setting up an ‘English Darts Association’ was not to standardise the game but to take control of it - even though darts was not out of control or yet in the hands of ‘others’ - something which Peel felt could only be achieved through standardisation.

[In Part Three I will discuss the road to standardisation.]

TOMMY O'REGAN

Clare B. contacted me recently via my website www.patrickchaplin.com writing

'Hi Patrick. I contacted Jacques Nieuwlaat @Master Caller for some info on a set of darts found at my Nan's house. They've redirected me to you for advice if you can help?

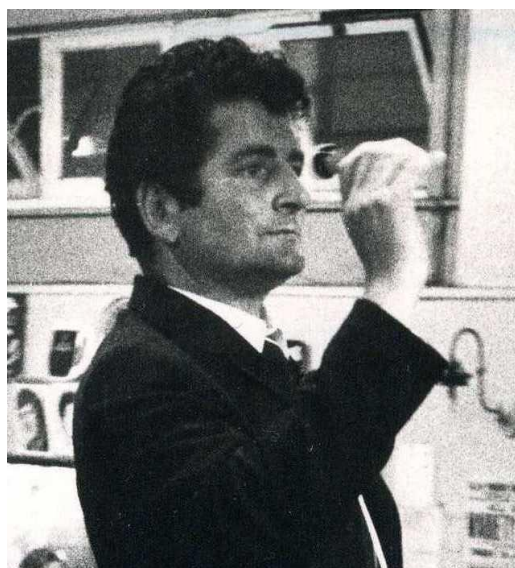


I have a set of Tommy O'Regan darts [see left] and I cannot find any information on them online: none at all. They are boxed. Don't look used. There's very little info on the box. Just "The Tommy O'regan Dart Range. Heavy" J&C Hughes. London. I cannot find this company online. No info at all.

Could you provide any info or advice as to how I find out more about them. Their age. What they're made of. The value etc.'

The Guinness Book of Darts (Revised edition 1982) summarises Tommy's career at that point as follows:

'O'Regan, Tommy (b. 28 February 1939). (See right. Image courtesy of *Darts World*.) No one is ever to equal his feat of winning the NDA [National Darts Association of Great Britain] men's individual three times in succession – in O'Regan's case in 1970, 1971, and 1972. The next year he won the Indoor League and captained England in the first Home International but he subsequently reverted to the green of Ireland.



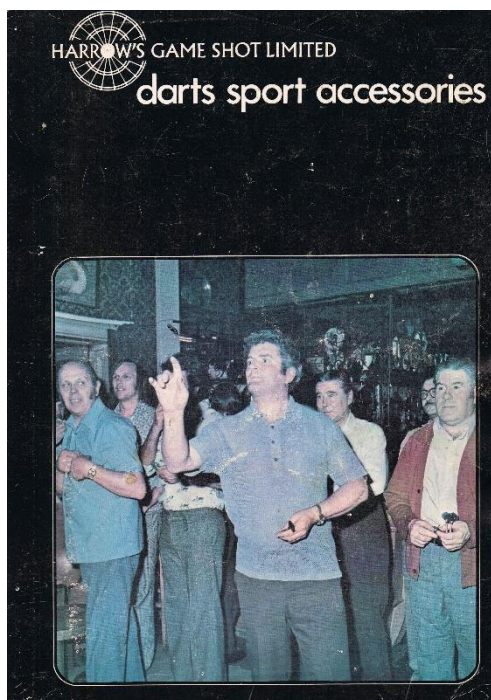
[He] Came from Co. Limerick to be an apprentice jockey for half-a-crown [2s 6d/13p] a week when he was 15. Threw darts with the other stable lads when it rained and his career went from there. Has always brought a typically-Irish cheerfulness to darts and the game has been that little bit duller (and quieter) since he went to seek his fortune in the United States.'

'Ex-H de H' told me,

'When Harrows was founded in 1973, the plan was to manufacture accessories and sell them to the trade, flights, shafts, wallets, etc. [See below the front cover of an early 1970s Harrows accessories catalogue. My archive.]

Tommy was signed in 1975 to put a focus on branded darts...his. The carton you showed me references Tommy's wins up to 1973 so these darts must date from 73/74. In fact, we tried to sell to J and C Hughes but with no success. I have no idea what happened to them. The darts

we made were styled on the brass style shown. However, they were made from tungsten and hence smaller.



Tommy never got on with them and his career nose-dived for many reasons. I think [Harrows] parted company with Tommy in 1978 or so. He returned to Ireland and died in 2000. He was a superstar of his era and I guess he was just too early on the scene to capitalise on his natural talents.'

Clearly the darts in Clare's possession composed of brass barrels and the popular plastic 'kite' flights and were either manufactured by J & C Hughes or sourced elsewhere by them to their specification(s). The darts are pre-1975 (that is, before Harrows started to sponsor Tommy) and there is no record of Hughes in my archive so must assume that it, like many other small dart manufacturers or businesses, closed many years ago.

Clare asked for the value of her O'Regan set but, as you know, I never give valuations as the market is so fluid and I would not, therefore, like to either over or

under value any item. I advised Clare that the best thing for her to do was to visit online auction sites to see what the prices are of similar sets to hers. However, if any reader has seen a set for sale recently and therefore knows what they are going for, let me know.

Also, if anyone knows what happened to J & C Hughes, please contact me.

A STUDENT ENQUIRES

Over the years I have lost track of the number of enquiries about darts I have received from students ranging from school essays or higher degrees. The only thing I ask for in return for my help/advice is that they send me a copy of their completed work/article/essay etc for my archive. (Not all are good enough to do that.) Many relate, of course, to darts history; one of the most popular themes being 'The Split' and the development of the Professional Darts Corporation (PDC). However, my latest enquiry, received in May, came from Alfie Howlett, a journalism student at the University of Gloucestershire.

Alfie wrote: Patrick. Would it be possible to get some answers on these questions which I could quote into my article?

Here are Alfie's questions and my responses:

In your opinion, just how much has Luke Littler helped contribute to the growth of darts in the last 2 years?

The 'Littler Effect' took hold in 2024 when he reached the finals of the PDC World Championship. His age and his undoubted skills were attracted not only to the national newspapers/websites that normally followed darts (like The Sun, Daily Mirror, and Daily

Star) but also by the heavyweight dailies like Daily Mail, Daily Express, even the Financial Times but also The Observer. Everyone – all media - was fascinated by this ‘new boy’ and wanted to know more about him, his life, etc., etc., etc., and the momentum was maintained when he took the title in 2025.

[Image of ‘The Nuke’ taken when he achieved a nine-darter in Bahrain in 2024 is copyright of the PDC. Used with permission.]



Has the game ever seen growth like this before? Is this arguably the biggest transformation darts has had in terms of public attention?

*Darts has never seen anything like this, ever. Even in the 1980s famous players like Eric Bristow (who was 27 when he won his first World Championship) and John Lowe, never received such attention. **(It is very important to remember that, back then, there was no internet.)** Darts has not been ‘transformed’ by Littler. The game has always, basically, been the same but what Littler has done is bring the game to a whole new audience – the young, thus forever removing the pub from people’s imagination of darts. No longer do you have to learn to play darts in the pub; the recent huge increase in darts academies is due to Littler.*

Do you think there’s even further growth to go? With the number of young people who have taken up darts, and the game expanding globally, do you think the game could get even bigger?

Growth in the number of people (especially the young) who want to copy Littler continues to increase week on week. How long this will continue is an unknown factor. As for the expansion of darts globally, I think you need to look at the work of the Professional Darts Corporation (PDC) and what they have achieved since its formation in the early 1990s and where PDC darts has penetrated thus far and where it is going today.

PATRICK CHAPLIN IS ‘DARTOID’



That’s what Paul Seigel - aka ‘Dartoid’ - discovered whilst investigating ‘Deepseek’ (whatever that is). Paul told me:

‘Hi Patrick. I asked Deepseek to tell me what was ‘Dartoid's World.’ You'll be amazed.’ It said:

“Dartoid's World" is a popular blog and online resource dedicated to the sport of

darts. It was created by a darts enthusiast known as "Dartoid," whose real name is Patrick Chaplin. Patrick Chaplin is a well-known figure in the darts community, recognized for his extensive knowledge and passion for the game.

The blog covers a wide range of topics related to darts, including:

- 1. History of Darts - Articles and insights into the origins and evolution of the sport.*
- 2. Player Profiles - Information and interviews with professional darts players.*
- 3. Tournament Coverage - Reports and analysis of major darts tournaments and events.*
- 4. Tips and Techniques - Advice for players looking to improve their game.*
- 5. Darts Culture - Stories and anecdotes that capture the unique culture and community surrounding the sport.*

Patrick Chaplin, through "Dartoid's World," has contributed significantly to the promotion and understanding of darts, making it a valuable resource for both casual fans and serious players. His work has helped to elevate the profile of darts and bring attention to its rich history and vibrant community.'

As Paul (the *real* Dartoid) told me "AI still has a ways to go!"

If you have not visited Paul's site (Why haven't you?) I suggest you sample it by the following link - <https://dartoidsworld.net/2025/01/column-677-a-trillion-darts/>.

This reminded me of something I meant to publish a few months ago. Over the last Christmas period my wife Maureen's cousin Russell dropped me an email:

'Greetings. Just thought you'd like to know that the following question was included in our Christmas Quiz compiled by immediate past chairman at the Golf Club yesterday evening....

"What age was Dr Darts when he threw his first dart?"

Legend or what!!'

Thanks Russell. 'Legend.' I doubt it. How many readers of *Darts History* could have answered that?

STAG DARTS

Another darts manufacturer that was mentioned to me recently and I decided to investigate was Stag Dartcraft. I have a set in my archive (see below, page 7, right) but was sure that, although it is clearly Stag, it is a later transformation of the original...

First port of call, as usual, was Dr. Eddie Norman who told me:

"The firm was owned by Jim Yuill, a young Scottish Engineer, who took over his father's engineering works in East Kilbride. He made superb hand painted 90% Tungsten Darts; not on a mass scale as he was only a two-man firm. But to the best of my knowledge, he was the FIRST to paint the barrels which he did by hand. He also cut aluminium canes with indentations and painted them, again, I think, a FIRST. The darts were beautifully presented in blue velvet boxes with Stag flights."

Eddie explained that Jim Yuill's darts were double the price of normal darts on the market because he was a small and a dedicated engineer who took pride in his work and could not cope with mass production. Although double the price of other darts, Stag Darts sold out as

soon as they arrived, and Dick Boel, who ran Microface Darts in Holland, wanted to take every set Eddie's House of Darts (H of D) based in Bristol had as the sole agent. Eddie told me that whenever 100 sets of Stag darts would arrive at the H of D they were sold out by the end of the day.

Then, one year whilst visiting Australia, Eddie introduced Stag darts to the Oz market which he told me was "a mistake," as it resulted in him receiving phone calls day and night for the darts. He then followed that by introducing them to the USA market. Eddie added that

"Jim also introduced a Stag Greys cheaper brand at 80% tungsten which also sold out immediately. They were in brown 'stag' wallets. I used to meet Jim for lunch halfway between his small factory and Bristol to discuss other ranges but it was decided to keep to the 90% and Stag Greys as Jim could not cope. I think his dad's engineering firm was called Yuill Engineering before changing to Stag Darts. It was like the Littler effect. Everyone wanted Stag darts and the painted aluminium canes."



As would have been predictable it wasn't too long before other darts manufacturers started copying the idea of painting the barrels, at which time Jim decided to sell out to John Bluck at NODOR where the name remains with that company.

The image of the Stag Dartcraft 90% Tungsten 22 gram Stag ®Greys® (above right) shows a set of the darts as produced by The Brackla Nodor Group (as it was called then, now NODOR), based in Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan, Wales. The company took over Stag Dartcraft in the 1980s. The description of the darts in this example includes 'Material – Tungsten Nickel,' Shafts – Stag fluted/regrooved anodised aluminium, 'Shaft size – 2BA Medium,' 'Flights – Stag Dimplex/Prismatic,' with the case type 'Fabric covered metal case.'

If anyone can provide me with an image of the original Jim Yuill 'Stag' darts product(s) please contact me patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com. In the meantime, if you have any memories of using Stag darts, please let me know.

JAMES KING WRITES

James is a member of the Europe Expats Darts Federation who recently wrote

'Dear Dr Darts. Thank you for the May Darts History. It was a really great read as always. Thank you so much for sending and sharing.'

It was so nice to see the article on the great Bill Lennard and to include a photo of his 'shovel' shape Union Jack flights he made so famous. And seeing his darts brought back great memories of Bill. Also, the great article on Darts in Taiwan and how the sport is growing out there. It would seem where ever Eddie Norman places his darting footsteps others soon follow.

I was reading Charis Mutschler's wonderful Global Darts website recently how darts started in Germany and how Eddie Norman founded darts competitions in Germany going back to the 1960's and look what the sport of darts he helped create almost 65 years ago has become today in Germany: this long before many of today's players and darts officials organising and playing darts in Germany and earning a living from the sport of darts today were even born. [Charis is pictured, right.]



Thank you again for a wonderful magazine'

With Kindest Regards,

James King

Note: Everyone who hasn't done so thus far should check out Charis's Global Darts (www.globaldarts.de) and not just about German darts but **global** darts.

£501 FOR A SET OF DARTS!

Surely a new record has been set by the production of darts celebrating ten years since Gary Anderson's 2015 World Championship. Check them out at <https://www.playwiththebest.com/gary-anderson-world-champion-2015-10-year-commemoration-darts.html> and comment please to the usual address.

NEXT ISSUE:

EXCLUSIVE - The BBC has "No plans" for televising darts! – A special report.

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