

DARTS HISTORY

(formerly *Dr. Darts' Newsletter*)

Issue 186

www.patrickchaplin.com

September 2025



THE EARLY BEGINNINGS OF MODERN DARTS IN GERMANY

My research into the history of darts tends to concentrate on the UK but, as you all know, I occasionally wander across the Channel into Europe and even across the pond to the USA and elsewhere. But on this occasion, I received an enquiry relating to early darts in Germany and decided to pursue it. The names that were raised were Joe Scott and Hans Wilder and a group of Englishmen from Bristol.

Joe Scott

In June 2025 I received this enquiry from John Jardine:

'Dear Dr. Darts, I trust that I find you well. I wonder if you could please help me with a query.'

Attending the recent World Cup of Darts in Frankfurt, I met up with Dieter, the grandson of the late Hans Wilder from Bremen who knew a Joe Scott who apparently was an Englishman who helped organise darts in Germany in the 1960's, together with the help of a group of Englishmen from Bristol in the UK.



They also apparently organised darts competitions in The Netherlands. Would you know who Joe Scott was and any information about him that I could let Hans' grandson know. Would Mr. Scott be still alive?

Thank you, John'

Neither name (Joe nor Hans) rang a bell with me so I searched my archive. All I found was this undated photograph of Joe (above, right). Interestingly, the badge on his shirt advertised the German *Schwaber Brau* plus, as will be explained later, Joe was minus a couple of digits on his right hand. So, I was sure that I had the right Joe Scott. (Image above right © *Darts World/PC Archive*) Many *Darts History* readers will guess what my next step was: contact Eddie Norman. Surely, he would have been one of the Englishmen from Bristol mentioned by John in his email.

As always, Eddie did not let me down. Within a day he wrote:

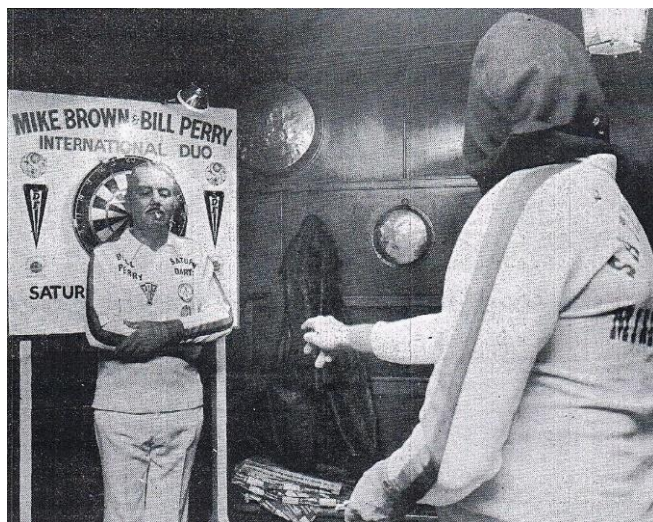
'Hi Patrick. Good to hear from you. I knew Joe Scott very well. He was a friend of Bill Perry. He sold darts to the US Forces in Germany out of a suitcase and was a very good player. He was English, married to a German lady but they went their separate ways. He lived in Bremen and then moved to Munich.*

He played right-handed with three middle fingers as his thumb and little finger were missing on his hand. He used 32 grms darts.

He helped us [Eddie and his brother Pete and The House of Darts] at darts tournaments in the 1960's both in Germany and The Netherlands. He brought along US Forces players to the tournaments and introduced them to the sport of darts.

Joe had photographs of himself with Elvis Presley at Ray barracks in Friedberg where Elvis was stationed and one in front of a dartboard which he proudly displayed at darts tournaments. I would guess around 1960, before I met him. He introduced me to the buyer for darts for canteens at US bases in Germany.

Joe used to do a darts display with Bill Perry throwing nails, hitting a cigarette off of Bill's tongue and behind his ears. Then one day, and I never knew the answer, Joe returned to the UK and seemingly disappeared. A few years later Bill Perry told me Joe had died but I heard nothing further.'



[The image, left, PC Archive, shows Bill acting as the stooge for a blindfolded Mike Brown aiming to knock out a cigarette from Bill's mouth as part of their exhibition tour of Sweden in 1978.]

I have tried to find out exactly what happened to Joe after his return to England but to no avail. Although I understand that Joe 'passed away some years ago.' I asked members of the *Darts*

from the Past Facebook page, who usually respond to my queries being good at finding 'lost' players, but they remained silent so, I guess, Joe's history remains incomplete. Unless, of course, any *Darts History* readers can help. If so, please email me at

patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

[*Bill Perry, from Worcestershire, was a well-known darts player and character of the 60's 70's and 80's who won the Swedish Open in 1973 and was renowned for his nail-throwing and for being the stooge for Shropshire's nail-thrower Mike Brown. Bill died in 2006. For more information about Bill and the 1973 Swedish Open see DDN #115 October 2019.]

Hans Wilder

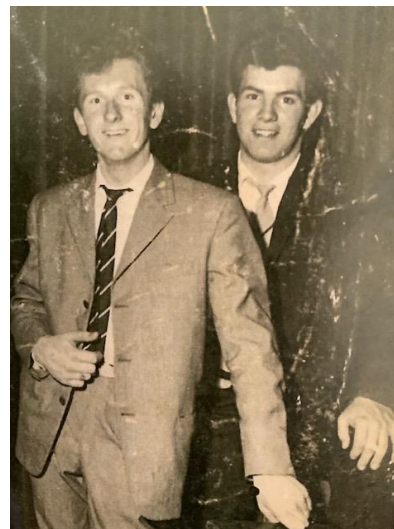
Then, of course, my next question was "Who was Hans Wilder?" whose grandson, Dieter, had prompted the original enquiry. John Jardine told me:

“Hans Wilder was German and was one of the first people to run a darts shop in Germany. He opened it around 1960 in Hamburg. With Joe Scott and a darts organiser from England the three attempted to start the first German Darts Organisation and were quite successful. He was one of the first importers of darts from England. His shop survived for about 15 years until Hans passed away. He was well known and a very good player.”

Not surprisingly, when asked, Eddie Norman knew Hans well:

“I remember Hans Wilder. He had a darts shop in Hamburg. I did not connect it at first that it was the same dear old Hans. Patrick, you have opened my memory book. I worked with Hans, supplying his darts shop for many years and we attempted many times to get a German Darts Organisation off the ground and I spent a long time working on it whilst organising darts tournaments.

In my archives I have found a couple of photographs. The first (right) shows Hans Wilder and Kevin Harrington, a member of the USA Forces in Germany, who helped us out with darts stands and lights for tournaments. Kevin was from Trenton, New Jersey.



Your correspondent may be interested in the photograph. (below, left) I think it would be about 1962. It was taken in Hamburg. Hans is on my left and Kevin on my right. (Photos © Dr. Eddie Norman. Used with permission.)



Another photo I dug up was the one below, taken, again, in 1962. Very blurred unfortunately and taken in Bremen (or Erlangen). Hans Wilder is on the left, a young me in the centre, and Charlie Schmidt (on the right) who was interested in running a darts tournament in Düsseldorf for the House of Darts International and also opening a darts shop in the city.

Boy was I young then, and with lots of hair. As they say in German, ‘Das waren noch Zeiten mein Freund’ or in English – ‘Those were the days my friend.’

Eddie estimated that the above photo was taken

‘...on one of my earliest trips to Germany setting up a darts tournament in Cologne. Over 500 players took part in the Cologne tournament, this was the First German “Masters” event. ‘Ties” always worn in those far off days. I think the photo is around 1973. I have a feeling it was to see if I could get any interest in a German entry for the new World Masters. Pete and I offered to sponsor a German entry through the company but no takers, although we did get the Belgian entry Andre Declerq.’

On 21 June enquirer John Jardine wrote:

'Hi Patrick. It is very kind of you researching German Darts History. I wish, like others, that I was around in those early days when German Darts was in its infancy. It must have been fascinating and had great people to help to see it grow from total scratch to what it is today. The early darts pioneers in Germany certainly started the ball rolling.'

Unfortunately, Dieter has no photographs or mementoes from his grandad. Hence, he is keen to learn anything about the early days of German darts in the days of his grandad and was clutching at straws for so many years. The photograph [of Joe Scott] looks great. Thank you for sharing.'

For the best information dealing with the history of darts in Germany check out Charis Mutschler's website at

<https://www.globaldarts.de/globalDartsEN/global/Europa/HistoryGermanynew.html>

ANDRE DECLERQ

Andre Declerq, mentioned above, (pictured, right and below, left) was born on 26th September 1908 so when he was invited to attend the inaugural (Phonogram) World Masters in 1974 he was, according to the programme, '65 years young'. He had come from Menem, later Zonnebeke, Belgium, won the Menem Individual Championship four times and been Belgian Champion three times.



At the time of that first Masters, Andre was the reigning Ostend Individual Champion and the Belgian Open Individual Champion. He had, by then, played darts for 50 years!



Despite his age, Andre (Image, left © Darts World/PC Archive) reached the last eight of that inaugural World Masters. *Darts World* (Issue 23, October 1974, pp 18/19) noted that

'The competitor who won the hearts of all the crowd was the oldest entrant – 65-year-old Belgian Champion, Andre Declerq. Andre put paid to the chances of Ron Stouchbury (London) and Dalys Elias (Wales) in 3-1 matches. And then he took the first game against Harry Heenan [Scotland] in the quarter-final. But Harry's fire-power was too much and he took the next three games, one of them with a 112 finish.'

Andre's victor, Harry Heenan went on to challenge the final against England's Cliff Inglis. According to *Darts World* the final 'really captivated the large audience' in which none of the five legs went to more than 20 darts with Inglis scoring eleven 'tons' and Heenan nine. Inglis went on to beat Heenan 3-2.

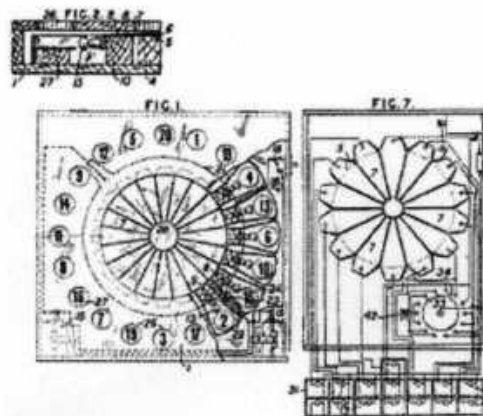
SOFT-TIP/ELECTRONIC DARTS – HAVE I EVER WRITTEN ABOUT IT?

In #185 (page 8) I responded to Tom Lucason, a member of the International Darts Federation (IDF), concerning a query he raised about the NODOR British Open which ran in Bristol in the UK from 1974 to 1977). He then added ‘I wonder if you had ever done an article on the soft tip sport.’

Long-time subscribers to *Darts History/Dr. Darts’ Newsletter* may recall that I did write a piece about the very early days of the electronic darts when a couple of Englishmen made the very first steps into the field of electronic darts. (For the full details see my website

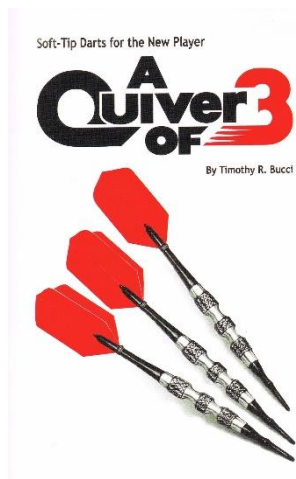
<https://patrickchaplin.com/2019/08/28/the-bungay-dartboard-and-the-broome-electronic-dart-target/>

(dartboard shown right) an article that combined my research of the Bungay Dartboard (not electronic) and the discovery of what I believed to be the invention of the first electronic dartboard.



In the Conclusion of my book, *Darts in England 1900-39 – A social history* (2007) I discussed the possible future of soft-tip darts in the UK. I wrote:

‘As for the long-term future of the sport, electronic ‘soft-tip’ darts – utilising machines which register and subtract the score as each dart penetrates the dartboard – is becoming increasingly popular in the USA and Europe.



For the moment, British dart players are rejecting the electronic version of the game based mainly on two premises, firstly, that it is a distortion of our traditional game and, secondly, the British have never had to pay to play, unless it was for a half pint of beer or a money match.’

However, in *Darts World* in July 2006, when reviewing Timothy R. Bucci’s book *A Quiver of 3 – Soft-Tip Darts for the New Player* (Indiana: Authorhouse, 2005), an excellent introduction to the soft-tip game I wrote:

‘If you think that soft-tip will never invade the UK, think again. It will eventually come like a thief in the night and gradually edge out our traditional game. Like the middle and upper classes of the 1930s, in this electronic, computerised, age, it is the young people of the twenty-first century who are continually in search of new novelties. For this reason, and because young people tend to be less defensive of tradition, electronic darts will eventually become the future of darts.’

But how wrong could I be?

Nearly two decades on and there is no sign of an electronic darts invasion and it is unlikely to happen now. However, the soft-tip revolution which began in the USA in 1975 continues to grow in the States where it can be seen in some States to stifle any growth of the steel-tip

game. In Europe, the electronic game appears to co-habit with steel-tip whilst both forms are enjoying expansion and increased popularity.

Whatever little impact soft-tip darts was expecting to make in the UK, and that turned out to be very little, except the electronic games enjoyed at numerous *Flight Clubs* that have opened across the UK and, indeed, throughout the globe, has now been decimated by Luke ‘The Nuke’ Littler; the young man who has breathed new life into darts and deflected any attention or discussion about soft-tip darts here in the UK away for the foreseeable future.

“AND THEN I FOUND YOUR HISTORY OF DARTS...”

One of my latest subscribers to *Darts History*, was originally looking for something pub-related on my website www.patrickchaplin.com. He then signed up. Zach D. wrote:

‘Hi Patrick. I am in the US: California specifically, and I found you through searching about pub names. I read a lot of old British books and one referenced the "God Encompasseth" origin of "Goat and Compasses." That seemed unlikely to me and I came across your article (confirming my view) while looking into it. I then became interested in the history of darts while reading other articles on your site. Please add me to your list for Darts History. Thanks, Patrick.’ (Welcome Zach.)

For anyone interested in learning more about pub signs, like the origin of pub names such as the *Goat & Compasses*, please visit the Pub Signs section of my website. For anyone interested in joining the Inn Sign Society (of which I am a member) please check out www.innsignsociety.com.

In all my research, in relation to darts, pubs, and inn signs, I have, only ever come across one pub called *The Dart Inn*. The pub was situated at 137 Ber Street, Norwich, Norfolk. It was initially called the *Blue Last* then the *Bull’s Head*. It was changed again in 1937/38 to *The Dart Inn*.

The poor-quality photograph of part of the pub, taken in 1973 with a Polaroid camera, fortunately does show its sign; a huge dartboard affixed to the roof. In 1980, Adnams the brewers based in Southwold, Suffolk, took over *The Dart Inn*, and, after improvement works, reopened the pub in September of that year with the more traditional name of the *Horse and Dray*. According to the *What Pub* website, the pub was closed permanently in October 2010 and converted into a Chinese restaurant.



If you know of any other pubs named after darts – lost or extant, please let me know at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

FALCON DARTS - FEEDBACK

Well, it’s not feedback in the strictest sense of the word. I was looking for something else and came across an issue of *Darts World* (December 1978) which featured two items relating to Falcon Darts which I featured back in April (#181). The first is the advertisement titled ‘Falcon’s follow Bill’s lead’ (see below, left) promoting the company but particularly its star players.

The Falcon team had only been formed three months earlier but were already a name for themselves around the country in darts competitions. Bill Lennard, described as 'Falcon's leading professional' was voted 'Man of the Match' when representing England in the Home Internationals at Morecambe and then his teammates, Bimbo Bowry and Goldie Goldsmith, fought their way through a field of 300 competitors, top County and International stars to win the coveted Sussex Open Pairs title.

falcon darts *Finish First in October*

1st	BILL LENNARD	<i>Man of the Match — 1978 Home Internationals</i>
1st	BIMBO BOWRY GOLDIE GOLDSMITH (Team Falcon)	<i>Sussex Open Pairs Winners</i>
1st	TIM STEDMAN (Team Falcon)	<i>Surrey World Masters Winner</i>
1st	LES CROSS (Team Falcon)	<i>Weybridge Singles League Winner</i>

Congratulations to Bill and Team Falcon
Exhibition bookings now being taken for TEAM FALCON.

Falcon Darts Ltd *Star Works, Wych Hill,
Woking, Surrey. Tel: Woking 69501*

Tony Brown and George Simmons 'by an incredible 3-0 margin' to collect the first prize of £700 cash plus perpetual trophies.

During the same month, another member of the Falcon Team, Tim Stedman, playing in Carshalton, won the Surrey World Masters title, beating a field that included all Surrey Super League players. During that same year Tim had paired with Bill Duddy (the 1967/68 *News of the World* champion) to win the British Gold Cup Pairs title.



According to *Darts World*, after the Surrey event, the M.C., 'proudly declared that the hundreds of supporters had witnessed some of the best competition darts he had ever seen thrown.' The photograph (above, right) shows Tim with Eric Bristow being presented with the Truman Bitter trophy as winner of the 1987 Cockney Darts Classic. (Image © *Darts World*/PC Archive.)

The other member of the Falcon Team, Les Cross, was recorded by *Darts World* as having

had his share of success since signing for the Falcon team whilst making a clean sweep of the more local Weybridge Singles League and where he joined up with the Falcon team manager Bob Warden and local favourites John Knowles and Brian Owen to win the Surrey Vernon Triples title. They went throughout the grand finals night without dropping a single game.'

In addition, within those initial three months, the team had collected more than £1,000 in prize monies and, as the *Darts World* reporter predicted, they are 'ready for their next step on their road to stardom.'

THE SILENT DARTBOARD

Back in the early 1920s, Ted Leggatt founded the NODOR Company. Although it eventually became famous as being the premiere manufacturer of darts and dartboards, it is not so well known that, when it was set up, it had nothing whatsoever with the darts business.

Leggatt was a scientist who had been practising with the manufacture of modelling clay (for children and schools). One day his daughter came home from school and said that the clay



she had used made her hands smell. Curious and always looking for a challenge, Ted began working on an odourless type of clay and soon solved the issue, and introduced 'no odour' modelling clay. The name of the product, and thereafter the Company, became NODOR.

everlasting' (See 1927 advertisement above) and that...

A few short years later, after throwing some of his clay on his office wall and throwing darts at it, he moved into making dartboards, sold as 'silent and

FEEDBACK – Peter 'POP' Brooks (#185)

Thanks to Chris Murray for pointing me in the direction of Derek Brown's book *Darts '78 – Your Guide to the Game* (London: Mirror Books, 1977, page 62) which provides a little more information about Peter Brooks. Derek wrote:

'Peter Brooks, aged 39, is a council labourer who plays for the Royal British Legion, Staveley, and for other teams in that part of Derbyshire. Describes himself as a seven-times-a-week dartsman - practice that helped make him an England reserve in 77.'

A copy of #185 was been forwarded to the enquirer, Harlie Hutton. She was very grateful for the information and very pleased indeed when Chris sent her his copy of the *Unicorn 1978 Year Book*.



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