

DARTS HISTORY

(formerly *Dr. Darts' Newsletter*)

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THE MIS-HISTORY OF DARTS

A new book about the history of darts was brought to my attention by darts book collector 'GF' who was taken to hospital after reading it. For legal reasons, I am unable to name either the title of the book or the author. I would have named the publisher but there isn't one cited. There were no contact details so I couldn't challenge any of the 'facts'

I have been collecting darts memorabilia, including many books, for more than 35 years but have never read anything like it. It opened my eyes I tell you! It made me think that I needed to go back to Day One of my research and start all over again.



According to this book there is so much I don't know and how much I *thought* I knew which now seems incorrect, despite my years of plundering primary and secondary sources up and down this country.

For example, I did not know that the British Darts Organisation (BDO), which I thought was formed in Olly Croft's front room in Muswell Hill, north London in 1973 was, according to the new book, **1927**. Furthermore, the inaugural BDO World Professional Darts Championship was held in 1978 (which is correct) 'at The Frimley Hall Hotel, Camberley, Surrey,' which I didn't know, as I thought the first 'Embassy' was held at The Heart of the Midlands venue in Nottingham that year. (Silly me!)

As for darts stars, I did not realise that Eric Bristow (pictured with me (above), some years ago – Image © Chiphotos) approached his game making 'arrow through the board



pronouncements' (whatever they were/are), and that he had a unique 'darts dance.' I have watched Eric play on numerous occasions and had never seen him 'dance.' He certainly didn't when the above photo was taken. Perhaps I missed it.

Nor was I aware of Eric's 'five-dart finish.' And I certainly didn't know that Wales' star the late, great, Leighton Rees was 'gruff.'

And, of course, who could forget other legends, such as Agnes “Aggie” Miller, ‘a widely respected figure in her local leagues.’ (Is Aggie possibly the lady in the striped dress in this unknown darts beano snap (above)? (Not a chance.) What leagues she featured in so successfully are not revealed.

And there was Joe “The Bull” Thompson, known for his ‘powerful, almost thunderous, throw,’ but where? No location is given. Try as I might, I could find no mention online of any darts player of that name. (At this point I stopped and thought, “You’re making it up!”)

The author is to be praised for uncovering the previously unknown ‘fact’ that John Walton, who won the Lakeside World Championship in 2001

‘...famously broke the PDC’s dominance in the late 1990s by winning the BDO World Championship, [which] demonstrated that the BDO still held immense prestige and that the journey to world championship glory was still very much alive within its structure.’



(Image of John with me (above, right) taken on 29th February 2016 at a chance meeting at Worcester Cathedral. We were both hundreds of miles from our homes. Photo © Moppix)

As John won the Lakeside World Championship in 2001, I am at a loss to know how he broke the PDC domination.



And who can forget Joe Locke? (not seen here, left, being hosed down after a lengthy mow). Can you?

Apparently ‘one cannot speak of the early masters without acknowledging the enduring legacy’ of dear ol’ Joe whose name was ‘synonymous with the sport’s nascent professional era’ of the 1970s in which Locke was a dominant force.

Why don’t I (or you) remember his smooth, consistent, throwing action and finishing prowess that saw him claim numerous, significant, titles; all his wins being ‘not just personal triumphs’ but also ‘victories for the sport itself.’ The author mentions Syd Tallent as a fertile darts player, being a competitor in early pre-1973 televised events but I think he may be confusing that name with Keith *Talent* a dart player who was featured in Martin Amis’s book *London Fields* (1989) and inspired on an actual world champion, Keith ‘138’ Deller.

As for ‘famous leagues,’ what about ‘The Naval Darts League,’ formed in 1923 of which no location is given. That was a strange title which (a) lacks its location and (b) it’s rare for naval darts teams to stay in one place for any length of time, thus teams (not leagues) were named after their ship, such as H.M.S Rodney (a ‘winner’ medal dated 1940) I wrote about in *Darts World*, October 1995; matches usually taken place on board or possibly, if room

allowed, below decks. H.M.S. Rodney's darts matches were played as part of the 'L.R.S.C.,' the Leading Rates Social Club sports in 1940.

Before this incredibly destructive darts history (?) book I was drawn to another section relating to 'memorable catchphrases and expressions' associated with darts. Of course, I had heard of the phrase, or rather the *shout* "ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY!" Where would darts matches be without the referee uttering those four words that ignite the crowd to placard-waving hysterics. (The cartoon, right, © Chip (1988) Used with permission) was prepared when members of my local darts team became far too distracted by the fruit machine.)



But what about the ever-popular **"YOU ARE, BY FAR, THE BEST IN THE WORLD!"** How many times have you joined in with that cry? And don't forget that eternal scream, the 'iconic call,' of **"GAME SHOT!"** whenever a nine-darter is achieved.

And finally, do you remember 1984? The World Championship and the feat achieved by John Lowe that 'sent shockwaves through the darting world'? It was then that he hit the first televised nine-darter in that tournament whilst playing against Paul Lim! So, Keith Deller, John's opponent on the day, and the MFI Matchplay have now been erased from history.

Could this book have been created by AI?

I must leave this review now, otherwise I risk meltdown...

EARLY DARTS IN GERMANY -PART TWO – THE HOUSE OF DARTS INTERNATIONAL

Following my article about early darts in Germany (#186, September 2025) I received an email from Roger Daniels whose father-in-law served in the US Forces during the late 1960s to the early 1970s. Roger wrote:

"Hello Patrick. Thank you for latest issue of your great magazine The Darts History, the best place to learn about Darts History.

I mentioned to you before my father-in-law served in US Forces around 1968 to 1972 based in Germany. Len J. Webb was his name; I guess an average darts player and he won a few trophies along the way. He died a few years ago but one trophy he was always proud of was a magnificent trophy for being runner up in The Bremen Open in 1968. He was a runner-up in 1971 in the German Open Championship in Heidelberg and played for two years in the Munich Darts League where he won a team trophy.

All three events were sponsored by a British darts firm called The House of Darts International as their name was on all three trophies. Len used to relate how the owner of the company was responsible for introducing darts into Germany in the 1960's and the owner said "One day darts will be bigger in Germany than the UK." Len had darts programmes for all these events which have sadly been lost after he passed, I tried looking up the House of Darts International but it seems to have closed.

I saw darts recently on television from Germany and my father-in-law and the owner of the House of Darts International, if still alive, would be amazed at when he created darts in Germany what it had become. It just needed the genius like him to take the risk and start it up and money would move in later into the sport.*

*My father-in-law won the equivalent of 500 dollars** for being runner up in the German Open and was more than happy. He always used to say big money will kill darts as a sport.*

Keep up the good work. Kindest Regards. Roger Daniels”

* The ‘genius’ referred to is, the very much still alive, Dr. Eddie Norman.

** 500 dollars in 1968 equates to \$4,678 or £3486 in today’s money.

I sent Roger’s email under cover of mine in which I wrote to Eddie that I was sure that the early development of darts in Germany was immediately post-war when the BAOR [*British Army on the Rhine*] played there and when any British Legion's set up (like in Holland) played the game. I added “Clearly you, and your late brother Pete, became involved in the 1960s.” (See Part One)

Eddie replied, full of information and memories as usual:

“Hi Patrick. Thank you for letting your correspondent know that I am still alive. Always good to hear!!

I do not remember Roger’s father-in-law but it would have been an honour to have met him, as I surely did when he entered a House of Darts International competition in Germany. As you know, military people are always high on my priority list

The e-mail about darts in Germany was so nice to read and certainly goes back a long way. I find it amazing that people retain so much darts memorabilia, or perhaps it is because I have never ever won a darts trophy in my life and ‘honorary’ ones I have been given, I in turn have given away. Thus, it was such a surprise to hear that some House of Darts International trophies from the 1960’s received a mention in Roger’s e -mail to you.

[*The advertisement, below, is taken from Darts World (December 1980) where Eddie’s name (and a characterisation of him) leads the advert. Later this was, of course, changed to The House of Darts International.*]

EDDIE NORMAN 453 GLOUCESTER ROAD, BRISTOL, ENGLAND Tel: 0272 514415 — 3 lines — Established 1962 MAIL ORDER OR CALLERS WELCOME — HALF DAY CLOSING WEDNESDAY. DARTS LEADING MAIL ORDER COMPANY — OVERSEAS ORDERS WELCOME	
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My own, and my brother Pete’s, love of darts in Germany actually goes back to 1963; some US military who turned out were based in Germany came into the House of Darts International and we gave them a selection of darts items to take back to Germany.

The House of Darts International were already supplying darts equipment to US Forces bases in the UK and we decided to take the sport to Germany. We had several outlets taking our products in Germany and we proudly had a 1962 travelling 'House of Darts Motor Home,' completely fitted out with darts stands. Nodor dartboards and electric scoreboard.

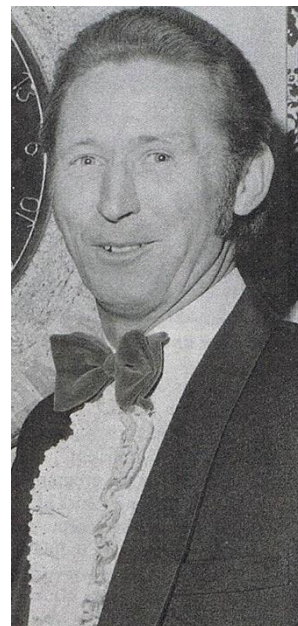
During the early 1960's and up to the early 1970's we arranged and organised and sponsored championships and tournaments throughout Germany and arranged two matches of USAREUR (United States – Army – Europe) Forces vs British Forces BAOR); the Americans, of course, taking the sport back with them to the USA.

My brother Pete, a fluent German speaker, loved travelling to Germany in the motor home (No Easy Jet in those days) and would often take along with him Bill Perry from Worcester who was magic on the camera. It is sad that Bill's photos of early darts in Germany were sadly lost when Bill passed.

The other person who travelled to Germany when we organised a tournament was Jack Price ('Mr. 180') from Bristol; probably the best caller ever in darts who called darts matches in German. Jack also took many photos of the early days of darts in the 1960s in Germany; sadly, lost when he passed.



The House of Darts International organised darts tournaments throughout Germany including Berlin, Bremen, Hamburg and Munich and organised the first German Open in Heidelberg with the



help of Joe Scott (see above left) a British exile living in Germany (also see Part One).

With the support and the generosity of the Nodor Dartboard Company, who supplied all the dartboards, The House of Darts International organised and sponsored the Munich Darts League for many years.

However it was down to those early pioneers like Jack Price (pictured, above, right) Joe Scott, Bill Perry and Pete Norman, together with The House of Darts International who foresaw the possible future growth of darts in Germany and why the sport is such a hit in Germany today; a sport that may possibly have never got off the ground without their firm foundations and belief the sport in Germany would only go upwards."

NO SOONER...

...had I published the two issues of *Darts History* tracing the early history of darts in Germany I, coincidentally, received an email from Joel E. asking about the history of both Germany *and* The Netherlands (the latter is in preparation).

We spent a good hour discussing both, including questions such as “Why has Dutch dart players won the World Championships when no German player has?” and “Why are there so many more professional Dutch dart players in the PDC than German?” “Do you think Germany can match the level of The Netherlands in the future?”

Discuss.

ACCESSING *DARTS HISTORY*....

I understand that *Darts History* is not always uploaded to my sponsors’ websites, so I suggest that if anyone you may know is having such problems, I apologise. I am pursuing it but please, in the meantime, advise any potential new subscribers to go to my website and subscribe (free of charge) via www.patrickchaplin.com or contact me direct at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

JIM CLARK AND BILL TALBOT – FEEDBACK FROM #192

James Clark, whose father (Jim Clark) was mentioned in #192 and whose uncle Bill Talbot whose name was raised in a match against Joe Hitchcock, contacted me again to say: James Clark followed up his information about his dad, Jim Clark, who had played for the St. Dunstan’s Four in the 1940s, I found an earlier email from James, from 2024, in which he provided information about his father’s career in darts.

James wrote back then:

‘Hi Patrick. I was having a bit of a clear out in my cabin recently and was delighted to find some of Dad’s medals and his darts. [See photo, right.] I decided to send them for inclusion in your file on him.

The four medals across the top of the photo were engraved as follows:

*Feltham Red Cross - Winner J Clark 1942-43.
Feltham Red Cross League, Feltham Area Doubles -
Runners up 1944-45.
Staines and District Darts League R/ups 1953-54.
League Championship - Winner J Clark 1946.*

The remainder are unmarked but interestingly they are all silver.

The darts were the ones he used in latter days and would have been the ones he used in his three treble 18 finale in the Brown Bear. In earlier years he had cane shafts (not plastic) and different brass bodies which had markings that I clearly remember. Unfortunately, there are no sign of them which is a little sad.’



[Interestingly, on Saturday 8th June 1946, the Editor of *The Dart* formally announced that ‘Jimmy Clark [is] now a regular player with The St. Dunstan Four.’]

More recently James wrote in respect of #192:

Hi Patrick. Just to let you know how much I enjoyed reading about Bill Talbot in your recent addition. I had no idea that Uncle Bill was an elite player. Like my Dad [Jim Clark a member of the St. Dunstan's Four] they never talked about their exploits.

Although I knew that my Dad was very proud to have played for St Dunstan's. But Uncle Bill going head-to-head with Joe was quite a revelation. I think he must have been some player. I was pleased that my Dad got a mention with his 90 get out on 18 double 18.

I have got the trophy that they won in the district doubles championships. Really nice that they remained friends for so long. I'm also glad that they had their darts to enjoy. It was a pretty austere time and there was not much going for regular people at that time.

Thank you, Patrick. James Clark.

THE YORKSHIRE BOARD

A couple of weeks ago I received an email from 'Specialist Journalist' Alex Wood. She wrote:

'Morning Dr Darts, I was hoping for an interview re. the Yorkshire Dartboard. My boss saw one in the pub the other day and she's interested in me following it up! I work for the *Yorkshire Post*. Would it be possible to send me your phone number? All the best Alex.'



After about an hour, Alex and I had covered the history of the Yorkshire Board, including how it was the forerunner of the standard/trebles board, which was great, given that she had never played darts and had no idea what the difference was between that board and the standard board.

This reminded me about the possible threats that surround some of the regional dartboards but Alex was able to obtain reassurance from WINMAU with the advice that "We currently have stock of the Yorkshire boards please refer to our website for any stock updates."

Hopefully this bodes well for the Fives Board.

For information about the many other regional dartboards check out

<https://patrickchaplin.com/2019/10/07/regional-dartboards/>

APRIL FOOL?

Was the lead article in this issue actually one of my occasional April Fool creations? What did you think as the author reeled off a version of darts 'history' for our delectation? Did those names like 'Aggie' and 'Syd Tallent' make you think of me sitting at my desk inventing silly names?

Well, think again. Apart from the old photos that I added for effect/entertainment, all the ‘facts’ I quoted were lifted from a genuine darts book recently published ‘independently.’

Thanks to ‘GF,’ Geoff Foreman, for the inspiration to review *the* book. (I joked about the hospital.)

CONGRATULATIONS TO DR. EDDIE NORMAN

Eddie Norman (pictured, right) and I have been friends for ages, having met in Bridlington years ago at the WINMAU World Masters. Since then, we have stayed in touch but rarely meet, one of the reasons being that Eddie is never home! He is always away promoting darts, despite the fact that he ‘retired’ some time ago.



Recently Eddie told me:

‘Patrick. You may know [I didn’t] that I recently made my third trip ‘preaching the ‘darts gospel’ to Alaska. This makes the fact that I have visited and been organising, or lecturing on, darts and helping set up darts businesses in all 50 US states at least four times during my, 65 years in the sport of darts in each state.

I have visited 95 independent countries to date lecturing, selling, and promoting darts and would like to visit another five I have in mind to reach 100 before I eventually retire or get too old to still sit on a plane and hang up my microphone.’

What a milestone Eddie. **65 years’** service to darts. **CONGRATULATIONS!**

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