

DARTS HISTORY

(formerly *Dr. Darts' Newsletter*)

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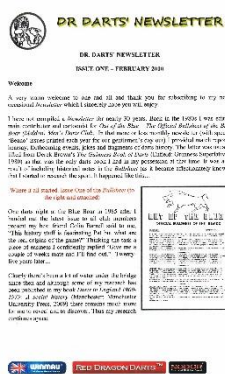
A VERY SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT



This is a very special time for me.

As I look back to 1985 when my friend Colin Barrell, who I was boring with what little I knew about the history of darts at that time, asked me “What’s the real history of darts then Pat?” I told him “Give me a fortnight and I’ll find out.” Forty years, eight books, numerous magazine and newspaper articles, TV and radio interviews, the odd podcast, and hundreds of pieces posted on my website later, I am still researching the game that has been such a part of my life for so long.

Someone who has been with me on my journey is David King who for probably three decades has been there to handle the techie stuff; advising me at all times when I suffer from computer-fog and guiding me through any projects that might spring to mind.



One of those projects was back in February 2010 (see cover of #1, left) when, after months of work and numerous calls and emails to and from David, I was able to announce the launch of the first issue of *Dr. Darts' Newsletter (DDN)*, a monthly newsletter which brought my followers up to date with my research. From the start, *DDN* has been sent by e-mail or in a few cases by snail mail. Over the years, many of you have provided great feedback and often contributed to the newsletters since the beginning.

My idea was that *DDN* would be available only to subscribers; darts fans who were genuinely interested in learning more about the history of darts or who could help me to develop my work by sharing information about their lives in, or experiences of, darts.

At that time, I feared that, if *DDN* was available to *everyone*, I would be open to all sorts of problems, so ‘subscription only’ enabled me to be the gate-keeper of my work. The only other darts fans being able to access *DDN* would be those friends of subscribers to whom the newsletter could be forwarded, or those heard of *DDN* by word of mouth or via my website, www.patrickchaplin.com.

Thinking that my newsletter would only interest a few darts fans, *Dr. Darts’ Newsletter*, and from #147 (June 2022) renamed *Darts History* to better reflect the newsletter’s contents, it is currently circulated to subscribers in more than 100 countries!

Having issued my newsletters over the past sixteen years, and researched darts since 1985, I believe it is time to open the gate and present *Darts History* to the widest-possible audience by making every issue available to all via David King’s website Darts501.com. So much of darts history has been distorted over the internet, with myths continually perpetuated despite my efforts to publish the truth.

Also, in the past, many subscribers have asked me for back issues which I have not been able to provide due to my lack of appropriate experience. That was until today. I am pleased to say that, whether you are a current or new subscriber to *Darts History*, every single issue of my newsletters is now downloadable from

<https://darts501.com/patrick-chaplin.html>

I will continue to issue *Darts History* to all of my subscribers and you will be the first to receive your copy before David uploads it.

Why Darts501.com and not my own website?

Because David and Darts501.com are better suited to hold and maintain *Darts History*. Plus, I have entrusted David to look after them after I’ve gone. I trust him implicitly.

Having said that, I’ve no plans to go just yet but time is always running out and that brings with it the redefinition of personal priorities. So, onward with #197.

A couple of decades ago, it seemed that the game of darts was disappearing from our pubs being replaced in favour of using the space to accommodate more diners. But all is not lost as Oldham, Lancashire-based writer, Pete Ryan, has noticed a growth in interest and regrowth in the game, at least in his area. Writing for his local CAMRA magazine More Beer, Pete has given me permission to reproduce his article about the changes, for the best, that are taking place in his area; signs that fresh life is being breathed into the game we all love.

DARTS – A RESURGENCE OF A TRADITIONAL PUB GAME

‘When I started playing darts in the early 1980’s, there was a board in almost every pub and active teams in around half of them. In the Rochdale, Oldham and Bury (ROB) Branch area, real ale outlets were also in far greater abundance - over six hundred compared with under three hundred today.

Fast forward 40 years and pub darts had become something of a novelty, with boards less common and often left idle.

Three years ago, we experienced the “Luke Littler Effect.” Luke burst on to the professional darts scene while still only 16 years of age, reaching the PDC World Darts Final in 2024. 12 months later he became World Champion and retained his title in 2026.

[Image, right, shows ‘The Nuke’ after hitting a nine-darter with his first three darts in Bahrain, 2024. © PDC. Used with permission.]

During this time, pub companies seem to have sat up and taken notice of a possible ‘new’ revenue stream, taking the opportunity to put dartboards back in their pubs, especially as part of refurbishment programmes.

On my travels around the pubs of Rochdale, Oldham, and Bury, I have encountered some great new facilities. I have also noticed a contemporary version of this old pub game favourite where you ‘pay to play.’



The Crown and Shuttle, Milnrow, now has two dartboards with electronic scoring. Brewer JW Lees have done an excellent job providing this high-class facility.

The Crown, Chadderton, have also installed electronic scoring and have created a nice Professional Darts Corporation (PDC) backdrop to give their ‘oche’ a more professional look.

The Angel, Royton, has four dartboards and regular mid-week competition.



Another pub specialising in darts is the **Royal Oak, Prestwich**, where former professional player and landlord, Paul Whitworth, who has run the pub for 27 years, has four boards and a team competing in the Cheetham Hill and District Log End or Manchester Board (pictured left) League.

[Paul, nicknamed ‘The Salford Devil,’ formerly played under the BDO and WDF rules and is best known for winning the Gold Cup title in 1996, beating Al Hedman (also England) 2-0.]

The Britannia, Middleton has two boards but only one manual scoring machine.

The Hunt Lane Tavern, Chadderton have recently created a new ‘oche’ complete with interactive scoring. This pub is a fine example where investment in the restaurant business has not been at the expense of regular drinking customers.

On a recent visit to Radcliffe, it was encouraging to see dartboards at **The Swan and Railway**, where the men compete in the Radcliffe Darts and Dominoes League, and at the **Old Cross Inn** (Holts Brewery), where the brass ‘oche’ is inscribed with the pub’s name.

I understand that, as part of a recent refurbishment of **The Queens** in Littleborough, a new interactive darts facility has been provided in this Thwaites pub.

In Manchester City centre, I have recently discovered a few ‘pay as you play’ dartboards. They range from £20 per half hour at **KINGPINS** in the Arndale Centre to £25 for an hour at **The Head of Steam** on Newton St (*pictured right*). There is also a Flight Club on Brown Street. All three are high-tech enabled smart darts systems.



There is a new facility called **The Dart and Pint Venue**, on Lees Road, Oldham (see image below left). This is a dedicated darts hub above the T20 darts shop. It has nine dart lanes and eight automatic scorers. At the time of writing, it is free to play. No real ale is available, but it is a good place to learn your craft.

More young people are playing darts, as evidenced by the demographic competing in the **Rifle Range**, Chadderton Wednesday Night League. **The Greyhound**, Royton, is also starting a Wednesday night KO competition and has invested in an interactive system.



Bringing dartboards back into pubs is returning a pastime and pleasure we had lost in recent decades. Licensees are reporting that darts teams are crucial for business, as they always were in the past, drawing in customers and boosting sales on traditionally quieter weeknights.

I hope more people will discover/rediscovers the game and pop along to their local for a couple of drinks and a ‘chuck.’ We may even see a rise in pub teams competing against each other in a league format. That would be a real throwback to those halcyon days of the 1980s.’

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As Pete tells us, this is merely a snapshot of the current darts scene in his CAMRA branch area and he has asked his local readers to let him know of other pubs with dartboards that he can add them to his list.

Clearly in Pete’s area, darts is going through a revival so let’s hope the same is happening elsewhere. If you can produce evidence of substantial regrowth in the sport in your area,

drop me a line at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com. Similarly, if the 'Littler effect' has awoken an interest in playing darts in areas that haven't bothered before, let me know!

FEEDBACK FROM #196

Thanks to everyone who has provided feedback on the July edition. It is much appreciated and proves that I am continuing to do something right. For example, Tom Lucason wrote:

'Hello Patrick. Thank you so much for the most fantastic and informative July *Darts History*.

The best read I and my friends have read for many a day was the History of Darts in The Netherlands. I loved Darts in Early Days of Germany but this equalled it. Two fantastic reads.

Congratulations to Eddie Norman for starting the ball rolling for Darts in the Netherlands. Where would Darts be without Eddie's kickstart?

[Tom. I wonder, and will always wonder, where darts would be in Europe today had it not been for Eddie and Pete's [pictured, right] 'invasion' so many years ago. I also wonder the same if the 'fathers' (which included Eddie Norman) of the British Darts Organisation (BDO) hadn't met in 1973. We must never underestimate the immense effect the establishment of the BDO and later the World Darts Federation (WDF) had on the development of the modern game, a team led by Olly Croft.]



Can you imagine no PDC? No Luke Littler. No Luke Humphries. Without doubt Eddie Norman started the way forward to give these guys a living in darts today and for many others also to enjoy the sport we all love and never expected anything in return.

Patrick. Hopefully, you mentioned Belgium might be your next project. [*I'm doing my best.*] 'Thank You' Eddie for your imagination starting the sport I have enjoyed for over thirty-two years. Eddie, our team will drink a toast to you at our next darts match.'

Alan Horsham wrote:

'Dear Dr Darts,

Thank you so much for such a fantastic July *Darts History* magazine and the wonderful history of Darts in The Netherlands. Where would darts be without the founding father...of modern darts, Eddie Norman?

His darts footprints and darts DNA is everywhere.

In 1972, I was 18 and ready to start University and living in Liege at the time. My father, a keen darts player, drove my brother and myself to the Beaufort Hotel in Maastricht to see Eddie Norman and meet Leighton Rees. I still have the memory of listening to Eddie and his talk on darts. I, like others, became a darts convert overnight and still play a weekly game with fellow older players.

If you get a chance (although not sure if he is still travelling as he must be 75+) be sure to attend one of Eddie's lectures it is better than watching a darts exhibition by any professional.'

[I told Alan that Eddie is now in his 80s and still preaching the darts gospel across the globe: aiming to visit two more countries, to make it 100 different ones he has visited, before he retires (again). Eddie asked me to pass on his thanks to Alan for his comments.]

Just as when Odysseus's mast was spotted from Ithaca on the wine-dark horizon, an epic darts journey was finally completed for me the night I met Eddie Norman in Maastricht in 1972 and that started my 54-year love-in with darts I am still enjoying.

Your Darts History is something I and my friends look forward to each month.

Yours in Darts, Alan.'

Chris Wade added:

'Hi Patrick. Great read the history of Dutch darts.

I moved to Holland in '94 and was amazed how many bars [*aka cafés*] played in the local leagues.

I started frequenting an English bar on the Markt in Maastricht and we (Landlord and I) decided to start a darts team. Within 2 years we had 5 teams. I was interested to see the photo of Peter and Eddie Norman in Maastricht. Do you know why they were here?'

I asked Eddie and he explained:



'Saw your note from a reader asking what Pete and I were doing in Maastricht [*in 1972*]. We had called a meeting at the Beaufort Hotel in Maastricht (It was still there last time I visited Maastricht) to promote the sport of darts but also to see if we could get more agents for House of Darts International. We had invited interested parties from Belgium, Germany, and Netherlands.

Maastricht is situated in the nearby vicinity of Aachen (Germany), Eindhoven (Netherlands), and Maasmechelen (Belgium) [*and*] we signed up agents for all three countries.

Leighton Rees (*see advertisement, left, showing Leighton promoting Kwiz Darts in 1980*) came on the visit with us to demonstrate the way to play darts. Nodor gave us dartboards to distribute to interested parties on the visit.

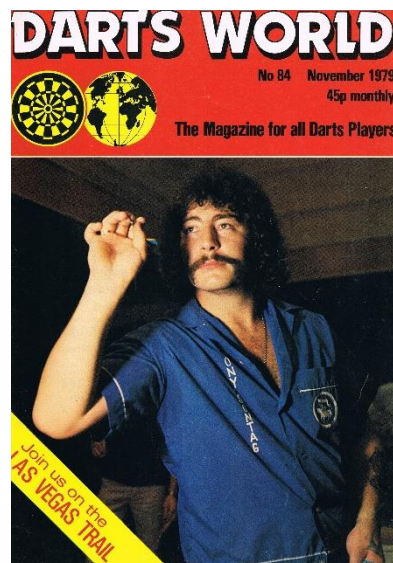
We also met potential sponsors from an airline and Dutch Brewery which proved very successful and we took the 3-day visit onwards to nearby Liege and Valkenburg but based our visit and stay in Maastricht.

The three-day trip was an outstanding business trip for our company.'

Dave Bracegirdle, Sports Broadcaster and Journalist wrote:

'Patrick. Very nice story from Eddie. The hotel is called 'Beaumont' is a very nice hotel opposite the station. I actually had some dealings with House of Darts International. I was dabbling in providing personalised darts flights when I started playing darts. And I ended up getting a big order from a magazine in The Netherlands. They printed the flights for me. Would have been 2002ish. I still have a couple of sets.

In 1980 I went on the official BDO tour to play in the Netherlands Open, somewhere in Amsterdam. Fairly certain Tony Sontag [pictured right, *Darts World*, November 1979] was in the final and I think, he lost to a fellow Brit who was just there on holiday and entered on the day!



It was August 1980 and I did a write up for *Darts World*, which featured a month or two afterwards. Have always wondered who that fella was and if he went on to become a 'darting name' or not. [Leave it with me Dave and I'll see what I can find out.]

Thanks Patrick, very interesting stuff as always.'

And finally, for the moment, Ben Andrews, from Hong Kong, who receives Darts History every month via subscriber Roger Christian, wrote:

'Thanks, Roger, for *Darts History*. A wonderful write up on Darts in The Netherlands by Dr. Darts, where I lived and played darts for ten years. Eddie Norman's darts knowledge is encyclopaedic, I don't think anyone more knowledgeable. He continues to broadcast his darts message as his *raison d'être*. Hope he continues for a long time.'

[So do I Ben.]

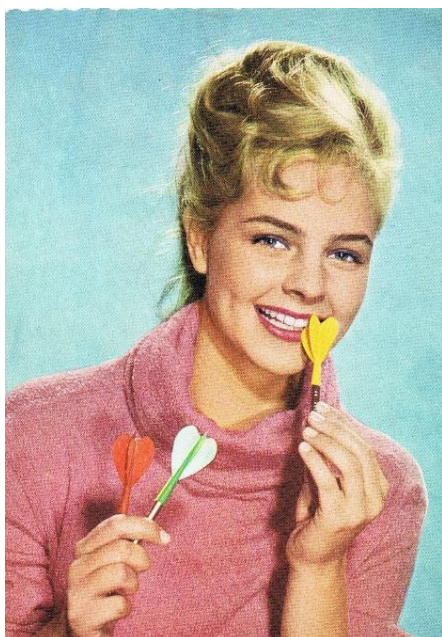
A POSTCARD FROM GERMANY

Those who know me well, know that I tend to buy absolutely *anything* to do with darts. That is how I have two rooms at home full of books and ephemera plus a garden shed full of old dartboards with others stacked up in our spare room (which is not really 'spare' any more) and amongst that ephemera are darts-related postcards.

Thanks to the world wide web, my collection of books and postcards has extended beyond belief. Add to all that, shelves and shelves of lever arch and box files full of information, research notes, and cuttings and what do I have? Chaos. My 'office' looks like a tip. If I could find my phone, I'd take a photo to show you!

Recently, my inherent eagerness to purchase 'anything of interest' led to me exploring the offerings of a German website. I entered 'Darts' into 'Search' and found two items. One offered an amazing image of 'Rondart & Jeanne.' Rondart, real name Ronald Tomlinson, as

many will know from earlier issues of *Darts History*, was an English variety turn who entertained his audience by ‘puffing’ darts at different target, including, of course, his wife Jeanne. I have written about Rondart’s activities in the past.



The second ‘offering’ was the postcard (left) of German film actress Sabine Sinjen holding three darts. Whatever the connection with our sport, I bought the postcard and was keen to find out more about Sabine.

I eventually discovered that Sabine was born in Itzehoe, Germany on 18th August 1942 and had a successful career in film, appearing in more than fifty movies. These included *Marili* (1959), *Madchen in Uniform* (1958) and *Wir-zwei* (1970).

Sabine died in Berlin on 18th May 1995, aged 52.

Sadly, I cannot find any reference to Sabine playing darts either on film or on the oche. Who cares? I do. I enjoy the postcard anyway. Perhaps any German film buffs amongst my subscribers can find a link and let me know at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

AND FINALLY...

My thanks again to David King for working so hard to ensure that every issue of *Dr. Darts' Newsletter* and *Darts History* is, from 10th August, available to everyone. Thanks too, David for the impressive banner you designed that appears at the top of page one and, of course, at <https://darts501.com/patrick-chaplin.html>.

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