

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 41 September 2013



Introduction

Thanks to everyone who entered the Scott Waites/WINMAU World Masters competition in Issue 40. This issue was prepared before the closing date of 30th August. The answer plus the names of the lucky winners will appear in the October *DDN*.

Windows 8 continues to be a steep learning curve for me but it seems as though I'm coping OK. I've certainly received very positive feedback from readers in relation to the special World Masters edition of *DDN*. Barry S. wrote, 'Gotta say that was an excellent article about the world masters. Loads of quality facts and really interesting. Thanks.' Mick S. wrote, 'Fantastic as ever. Very informative about the World Masters.' Jon Boy A. said, "Thank you very much. Another great read, keep up the good work, always look forward to the newsletters arrival in my inbox." And Tony U. from Mexico wrote, 'Hello Patrick. Thank you very much for the latest darts news, a fantastic read. Very much appreciated by all here,' adding, 'Regards to all at *Darts News*.' But sadly...



Once again the world of darts is mourning the passing not one but two of its sporting greats and both Durham County players, namely, Phill Nixon and John Bonner Thompson. The image (left) shows Phill receiving his 'Local Heroes' award in 2007. (Picture courtesy of the *Northern Echo*. Used with permission.) My tribute to Phill follows whilst the one to Bonner can be found elsewhere in this issue of *DDN*.

PHILL NIXON – 'THE FERRYHILL FLYER'

Many darts fans will never forget the 2007 Lakeside World Professional Darts Championship at Frimley Green when Phill Nixon from Ferryhill, County Durham in the UK staged a spirited comeback to give England's Martin Adams more than a run for his money.

Adams, still seeking his first world crown after fourteen years of trying, won the first six sets and seemed to be cruising to the title. Lesser players would have held up their hands, put their heads down and accepted defeat...but not Phill Nixon. 'The Ferryhill Flyer' had other ideas and the 150-1 outsider at the start of the tournament, fought back to level the match at six sets all, thus forcing a decider. *Darts World* reporter Wayne Baker described the match as 'a sensational 13-set thriller.'

Adams missed four title-winning doubles but as Wayne Baker enthused, Phill Nixon ‘transferred what was going to be a clinical victory into one of the best finals in the 30-year history of the tournament.’ In the thirteenth and deciding set Phill had one shot at double 18 to save the match, but failed and thus, at last, Adams became World Champion but despite his defeat Phill had written himself into the darts history books.

Phill passed away in the early hours of Friday 9th August after a short battle against cancer, a condition that had only been diagnosed a few weeks earlier. Phill was 57.

A message from the British Darts Organisation (BDO) included the words that Phill ‘took his illness in the same way that he did his darts: he fought to the very end’; clearly an allusion to Phill’s general fighting spirit and that classic 2007 Lakeside encounter. Darts professional Bobby George tweeted, “So saddened to hear of the news [*Phill was*] a lovely fun guy who will never be forgotten.”



Almost immediately after the diagnosis had been confirmed more than twenty of darts’ biggest names, including Tony O’Shea, Martin Atkins and Peter Manley attended an event at the Ferryhill Working Men’s Club on 10th July organised by Phill’s close friend and County Durham teammate Gary Taylor. Entrance fees, an auction, raffle and other fund-raising activities raised over £7,300 for Phill’s family and nominated cancer charities. Fittingly, a sum of £1,000 was given to the chemotherapy unit at the University Hospital of North Durham.

Phill Nixon represented County Durham for many years, played in the Durham Super League and local leagues. He also supported charity events with local appearances. At the national level Phill reached the quarter finals of the WINMAU World Masters in 2002 and 2012 and the semi-finals of the British Open in 2004. He also played seven times for England in full internationals, winning on five occasions. Phill also played three times in representative matches for his country.

But it was his sterling performance in the 2007 Lakeside final that brought Phill to national attention. After twenty years of trying Phill had made it to the Lakeside finals and what a performance he gave! After beating Darryl Fitton 3-1 in the first round, Phill then took out Martin Atkins 4-1 in the second round, Paul Hanvidge 5-4 in the quarter-finals and then Niels de Ruiter 6-4 in the semi-final to meet Adams in the final. Later that year his local, regional newspaper named him as the overall winner at the *Northern Echo* Local Heroes sports awards.)

On hearing news of Phill’s death, Martin Adams told the *Northern Echo*, “I’d known him a lot of years before he came to prominence at the Lakeside in 2007. He was a great competitor and a very nice man with it. Sadly we’ve lost a very good all-rounder in our sport, who was respected and liked by everybody.”

Dutch *DDN* reader, Ad K. was saddened by the news of Phill's death. Ad told me, "We met [*Phill*] a few years ago at a tournament here in the south. A nice man who had a kind word for everyone." I am sure all *DDN* readers will join me in sending sincere condolences to Phill's wife Suzanne and all of the Nixon family. He will be sadly missed.

[My thanks to Dani Webb of the *Northern Echo* for her assistance in preparing this tribute.]

The image of Phill on the previous page is the only one of him that I hold in my *Darts World* photographic archive. This 'snap' was sent by Phill to the then editor, Tony Wood. Phill wrote, 'Please find enclosed a photo of myself for inclusion in the next issue of 'Darts World', with reference to my nine dart 501.' Can anyone tell me the year in which Phill achieved this feat?

EARLY STIRRINGS OF DARTS IN DENMARK

I am grateful to fellow Pub History Society (PHS) member Chris M. for sending me a darts-related item extracted from the Whitbread book *The Britannia Inn – Universal and International Exhibition Brussels 1958*.

The *Britannia Inn* was a 'portable' pub created as a show pub by the brewers Whitbread for the Expo '58 World's Fair in Brussels. A few years after the Fair the *Britannia* was temporarily erected in Copenhagen *with a dartboard* and, as Chris's research revealed, 'some reference is made to the early stirrings of interest in darts in Denmark. An extract from his research of the Whitbread archives states:

"An interesting by-product is the craze for darts which is sweeping through Copenhagen. A first Danish national darts championship, introduced in the Britannia as a rather light-hearted novelty, developed into a deadly serious contest between twenty teams of eight players each. British European Airways put up a Trident Cup for annual team competition – it was first presented last October by Captain A R Glen, Chairman of the Export Council for Europe – and Whitbread's will be providing the 1965 singles trophy".

So, is that *really* how darts began in Denmark? If so, who were the leading Danish darting trail-blazers back then and what happened to the Trident Cup?

(Thanks again to Chris. For further details about the *Britannia Inn* see Chris's article 'The Pub that got Homesick and Came Home' in the PHS *Newsletter* Summer 2009. For more information about the Pub History Society visit www.pubhistorysociety.co.uk.)

SEWA DARTS

Some time ago Eric McVay of the SEWA (South Eastern Washington Area) darts website asked if I would trial the new 'Team SEWA' darts manufactured by Red Dragon

(see below) and I was lucky enough to be sent to set for that purpose. Then last month Erik e-mailed me to ask, “Did you chance to toss them a bit?”



Apologies to Erik but due to various reasons the official ‘Dr. Darts’ trials had to be postponed but I can promise Erik and *DDN* readers that the result of my three-man team trial and my practical review of these quality darts will appear in the October issue.

ROBERT HOLMES

Thanks to Stiophan from Eire for pointing out to me the error of my ways in relation to the article in last month’s issue about Robert Holmes leaving the post as PR Consultant to the British Darts Organisation (BDO). I wrote that Robert ‘was brought into the BDO fold by Olly Croft in September 2003.’ This should have read ‘1993’. (David K. also pointed out this error.) I then referred to the ‘2004 Lakeside World Pro’ as being the first to be devoid of the top players such as Eric, Jocky and John. Of course, this should have read ‘1994’. The faults are entirely mine and I am very happy to set the record straight.

...and Robert’s successor

According to the BDO website, Gareth Thomas, ‘an aspiring young journalist who has spent the summer working with the BBC as a *Kick Off* sports reporter for BBC Wales’, will be taking over the position of Press Officer with immediate effect. Gareth said, “I’m delighted to be given this chance to work with the BDO, founders of darts as we know it. I hope to begin a process to modernise and improve communications with ordinary darts fans from around the World during my time here.’



Gareth told me, “I’m incredibly excited to join the BDO, even if it's only on an interim basis...but this is a massive opportunity to further my experience and I can only thank the BDO for giving me this chance to improve the company any way I can. I feel that social online media is vital to reaching the masses and this is something I noticed the BDO could get better at. This will

be my aim and I hope darts fans from across the world will find this useful.” With a flourish Gareth enthused, “The BDO and WINMAU are the first and the best. Get behind us!!”

WHAT ABOUT THE GIRLS?

In response to my WINMAU World Masters special edition, David K, from Lancashire wrote, ‘Patrick. What about the girls!! Trina [*Gulliver*] has won the Masters five times and did four in a row!! 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004, [*and*] 2005.’

Fair point, but I did say in issue #40 that there would be more fascinating World Masters facts coming up in future issues and, as promised, Colin Saunders has produced the goods again. Colin tells me that since the inauguration of the Women’s WINMAU World Masters in 1982 to date the total number of participating players was 939. They played a total of 2,142 matches and won £166,700 in prize money.

Thirty ladies have appeared in the Women’s World Masters on ten or more occasions. Two players jointly hold the record of twenty appearances each: Wales’ Sandra Greatbatch and The Netherlands’ Francisca Hoenselaar. The league table for prize money is headed by England’s Trina Gulliver with £22,000 closely followed by Francis with £18,400.

But over and above the more ‘famous’ ladies, history was made at the 1992 World Masters. At that tournament Welsh schoolgirl Leeanne Maddock achieved a hat-trick of ‘firsts’ when she became, at 17-years old, the first teenager to take the World Women’s title (beating Sandra Greatbatch 3-2 in the final), the first girl to win the World Masters Youth Singles (beating German youth champion Christian Lechtken 3-0 in that final) and the first competitor to take both titles in the same year.

(My sincere thanks, once again, to Colin Saunders for preparing this fascinating data on the World Masters *AND* there’s more to come in the next issue.)

And don’t forget that you can find out all you need to know about this year’s 40th WINMAU World Masters at http://www.winmau.com/pages/783/World_Masters/.

MYSTERY PLAYER – MYSTERY SOLVED

You may recall that in issue 40, fascinating facts provider Colin Saunders asked *DDN* readers to help him out. The quest: to find out the real name of the player who contested the 1989 WINMAU World Masters but who had been recorded by the BDO as both ‘Jean Le LucClero’ and ‘Jean Le Clero.’ Well, thanks to Swiss darter and organiser Beni Petris I am pleased to say that the mystery has been solved. According to Beni, the player was **Jean-Luc Leclercq** of France. (Thanks Beni.)

Colin Saunders was so impressed with *DDN*’s power to solve puzzles that he has asked us for our help once more. He writes, “Patrick, the only match I do not know who won in all the years of the Women’s Masters event, is in the Preliminary Round of the

WINMAU in 1984. In that match Nadine Bentley (England) played Megan Roberts (Wales) but I do not know who won or what the score was. Can your readers help me again?" We'll do our best Colin. If anyone has the answers then please contact me either via my website www.patrickchaplin.com or by e-mail at info@patrickchaplin.com.

JOHN BONNER THOMPSON

Just over a month before the death of Phill Nixon was announced, another well-known player was lost to the County Durham darts community. John 'Bonner' Thompson (b. 3rd May 1938) died of cancer on 8th July aged 75.

Former England player, darts partner and close friend of Bonner's for more than fifty years, Doug McCarthy, told me, "Bonner first started playing darts at the age of eighteen for the *Gas House Inn*, Crook [*County Durham*] and two years later won his first trophy"; the first of hundreds he would win both locally and nationally in his long darts career. Doug added, "Bonner captained the famous King's Head [*Crook*] team for fourteen years during which time they won the Tyne Tees television 'Double Top' darts competition in 1972." The other members of the victorious *King's Head* team were Doug, Peter Hawkins and John Burdess.

In both 1975 and 1976 Bonner (pictured below during his early playing days) partnered by Doug McCarthy, won the North of England area of the Unicorn World Championship. In 1975 they reached the England semi-final where they were beaten 3-2 by the Southern champions, Ken Brown and Dennis Nutt. The following year they went one step closer, making the final of the England area by beating the Northern champions Alan Venis and Ian Dobson in the semi-final. However, they were beaten in the final by the West Midlands duo of James Jewel and Robert Baxter. (Image © The *Northern Echo*. Used with permission.)

In addition to making the England play-offs of the WINMAU World Masters, Bonner was a member of the *Travellers' Rest* (Spennymoor) darts team; a team which won the all-England NODOR Fours title in 1975 beating the Eyres Monsell Club, Leicester two games to one in the final. Other members of the winning team on that day were Doug McCarthy, Bob Ludkin, Peter Hawkins, Ernie Peckitt and Mick Cummings.



Bonner once told his friend Doug McCarthy of his two proudest moments in his darts career. The first was beating the great John Lowe 2-0 to win a Pontin's *News of the World*-sponsored individual trophy from an entry of 500 players in the mid-1970s. His second was being picked for the England squad in 1977; a team that included his pairs partner Doug. The match was England v Scotland and was played at Newcastle. Bonner was named as reserve for that match and was only the second County Durham player to be selected to play for his country.

But why 'Bonner'? No one really seems to know. What is known is that John 'Bonner' Thompson was 'a great darts player', 'a genuine guy', and 'a great man to have a beer with'.

RIP Bonner.

NEWS FROM GREENLAND

As the *DDN* global family grows ever larger, I am thrilled to be able to announce that the Greenland Darts Association (GDA) has joined our happy throng. Earlier this year I was contacted by James Johans, General Secretary of the GDA.

James, who is based in the capital Nuuk (population: c. 16,000), told me, "The Greenland Darts Association was started by Eddie Norman. The Association has over 400 members both ladies and men," adding, "I never ever thought I would see the day that darts was played in Greenland." James told me, "Football is popular here in Greenland, as are shooting and fishing but thanks to Eddie darts is growing. I think he could get a marbles league off the ground if he tried!"

In addition to darts being played in the capital Nuuk, James told me that the Association has already expanded to other cities, among them Sisimiut, Aasiaaf, and Maniltsog. James, who works and lives between Baltimore and Nuuk, added, "We have the only university in Greenland here in Nuuk and are hoping that many of the students will be interested in the game of darts. Eddie has promised to speak to them at some stage in the future."

James' colleague Hans Slotved told me earlier this year, "Eddie explained the rules and set up a league for us. And he gave us a trophy to play for. We play darts in hotels, clubs and even the garages of members."

It is very early days as James told me, "We have no great players, but are enjoying the game and improving." As regards sponsorship, James said, "We have many sponsors here to help us promote the game with and others waiting, but we take one step at a time."

It is, of course, early days for darts in Greenland but I am sure that, as the game spreads across the country backed by the enthusiasm of folks like Hans and James, we will be hearing more from this new Association.

I wish James, Hans and all members of the Greenland Darts Association every success in the future.

JON'S GRANDDAD AND DURRO FLIGHTS

Back in January this year I received an enquiry from Jon A. He wrote, "I was wondering if you could offer me any advice. I'm trying to track down some flights. My granddad,

Alexander Taylor of Stratford, east London, worked for Durro in Leyton, in the '70s and did a lot of designs for them. These included Tommy Cooper, Muhammad Ali, Margaret Thatcher, the Crafty Cockney, 'E. B. Jeebies', and 'Jocky at the Oche', amongst others. I would love to buy some but don't know where to start, I would appreciate your advice.' Very kindly Jon also wrote, 'Your website is brilliant by the way, having fun working my way through it.'



After some research I established, as I thought, that the Durro company no longer exists but that, according to one of my sources, 'Retriever Sports [*still very much in business today*] always made nearly all the darts flights in those days.' My source added, 'They made flights for everyone and most firms just put them out under their own firm's names. The ones your enquirer mentioned are really very, very old and to my best of knowledge went out of print many years ago. The Maggie Thatcher flights were never popular...' (The image above shows some of the designs mentioned in the text plus James Cagney. These and others can be found in Derek Brown's *The Guinness Book of Darts* (1980), page 38.

Given this information I suggested to Jon that he checked out Retriever Sports' website www.retrieversports.com, to see if they still sold those designs. If Retriever was unable to help then I suggested to Jon that, provided the copyright belonged to his granddad and that he had passed it on to Jon, the designs could be put on to dart flights by Red Dragon Darts at <http://www.reddragondarts.com/flightdesigner/>.

CAUSING A STIR AT THE *LION AND FIRKIN*

Gary McR. from Ontario, Canada writes, 'Patrick, I have been reading your past newsletters and find them fascinating, please add me to the list so I don't miss any articles.' (No problem Gary. Done. Glad you could join us.) Gary added, 'I started playing when I was five years old. My dad would put a chair up so I could be almost level with the cork [*bullseye*] and stopped when my father passed away 35 years ago.'

I have just got back into the game and my ancient darts started a whole conversation at the pub causing me to seek out info and finding your page. This is no longer my father's game but I'm giving the youngsters a run for their money.'

Gary's mother was from Manchester and his father from Belfast. Gary added, 'So darts were a natural for him and I still have a trophy or two from his darts league hidden away

in boxes. I am now a very active 61 years of age and the first set of darts I owned, and still sometimes use, are wooden with inlaid lead and real feathers which are a b*gger to change when you damage them. I still have one of my dad's old log-end elm Yorkshire boards which has the very narrow doubles and no triples and needs soaking. I also have his brass darts with the wooden shafts and turkey feathers and his last set which were brass and acrylic with plastic flights that are held in by a small brass cotter pin.'

With all of those pre-tungsten darts available, it's not surprising that Gary has been causing a bit of a stir down at his local the *Lion and Firkin* from where, if necessary, he tells me he can 'stagger home'!

Welcome to *DDN* Gary and all those of you who have joined us since last month.

CHESTER BREWERY TROPHY

Paul M. has e-mailed this fascinating image of the centre of a Chester's Brewery darts shield in his possession which, according to the Hallmark, was made in 1910 (the Edwardian-style figures would seem to bear this out). However, according to the smaller shields around it, the trophy was first contested in the 1953/54 season and was won by the *Clock Face Hotel*, Beswick.

Chester's Brewery was first registered in April 1888 and could be found at Princes Street, Ardwick (now part of Greater Manchester). It was taken over by Threlfall's Brewery to form Threlfalls Chesters Ltd in 1961 which was in turn taken over by the brewing giant Whitbread in 1967. According to the trophy it was last contested in the 1964/65 season when the winners were the *Cotton Tree*, Droylsden. The brewery in Ardwick was demolished in 1966 so perhaps that was when the actual competition ceased.



So, questions...

Does anyone know anything at all about the history of this superb trophy? Given the area in which it was contested, was it played for on the smaller and more local Manchester Board? And the most difficult question, where was the trophy hiding between its year of manufacture (1910) and 1953?

As usual all theories are welcomed, so write to me at info@patrickchaplin.com and tell us what you know.

AND FINALLY....

Readers may recall that in previous issues of *DDN* I have alluded to the great work being undertaken in Australia by Russ Strobel and his associates in relation to wheelchair darts. Russ's work is perfectly showcased in a recent interview with Charis Mutschler at <http://www.globaldarts.de/globalDartsEN/interviews/RussStrobel.html>.

I absolutely insist that you all check this out and learn more.

OK. That's it for this edition of *DDN*. I hope you've enjoyed it.

I'll see you next time.

Patrick

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PUBLICATIONS:

My latest book *180! Fascinating Darts Facts* published by The History Press is now available. Copies can be purchased direct from www.thehistorypress.co.uk or Amazon.com. UK subscribers can obtain signed copies direct from me at an inclusive price of £7.50. Contact info@patrickchaplin.com for details. (It is hoped that this service will be available to international subscribers soon.)

My academic work, *Darts in England 1900-39: A social history* is now available in paperback at £15.99 (plus p & p) and can be ordered from www.nbinternational.com.