

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 46 March 2014

WELCOME ONE AND ALL...



The months just seem to fly by don't they? No sooner have I completed one *DDN* than it's time to prepare another!



In this bumper issue I talk to John Gwynne (pictured left) about life after the darts commentary box and his recent induction into the PDC Hall of Fame. Plus I have a shed load of feedback from the February issue to pass on to you and news of a Royal couple playing darts in a pub near me.

And sadly we mourn the passing of yet another great dartsman; this time Welsh legend Tony Ridler who died on 16th January.

FOLLOW UP FROM RECENT ISSUES

(a) 'Dr. Darts' lecture to visiting students from the USA

As revealed in *DDN* #45, on 7th January at *The Peacock* pub in the City of London, I lectured on the history of darts to a group of enthusiastic young sports students and staff from the Longwood University, Farmville, Virginia, USA.

Having sent a copy of *DDN* #45 to the group leader, Jason "Jake" Milne, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Sociology, Jake replied, "Patrick, Thank you again for hosting us and for introducing us to the sport. It really was a great night. I have actually forwarded the newsletter on to our Public Relations department at the University. If something comes out in a publication that we produce, I will send it your way... Thank you again for your time!"



Jake's colleague, Jennifer C. Cox, Associate Director – Off Campus Living who also accompanied the students to London, subsequently sent me a number of images of that night including the one above. (©2014 Jennifer C. Cox. Used with permission.) Another, not shown here, features this old English darter trying to impress the students with his darting skills.

I thoroughly enjoyed talking to the students, something I hadn't done, due to writing commitments, for a couple of years. This made me think that perhaps there is a wider market in darts for me to talk to other groups, academies, league presentation nights,

etc., about our great sport. So if anyone is interested in talking about such opportunities, I'd be pleased to hear from you. I can be contacted via info@patrickchaplin.com.

(b) The Lightning Darts Scorer

I received a wonderful series of e-mails from Martin Hilson, the grandson of Oliver Hilson the inventor of the 'Lightning Darts Scorer,' featured in issue #45.

Martin thanked me for the feature and forwarded copies of images of advertisements, patents, order forms and other documents relating to the 'Lightning Darts Scorer' which have added so much more to my existing knowledge. I believe that I now hold the more or less complete history of this fascinating invention.



Imagine my surprise when, a few days later, a package arrived from Martin enclosing a whole range of photocopies. These included Minutes of the First Annual General Meeting of the "Lightning" Automatic Scorer Co., and an order form which indicated the range of colours available. Of the latter Martin told me, "I'm not sure if this [colour range] happened but it will keep me searching." The two scorers that Martin has in his possession are 'black and walnut.'

I was stunned when Martin added, "My late dad [Barry Hilson] was so pleased when you wrote your first article about his father and his invention. As a way of a 'Thank you' I have enclosed an original blueprint for you to keep."

As you can see from the expression on my face I was thrilled by Martin's generous gesture. The 'Lightning Automatic Dart Scorer' blueprint has now been secured away in my archive for posterity. Thanks Martin.

(c) Dartitis

Bob Johnson's advice regarding Dartitis, which was featured in the November *DDN* continues to reap benefits for sufferers of the condition. Via a darts forum I was asked to provide a copy of #43 so they could read what Bob has to say. I also contacted Bob to see if any of his previous 'clients' (so to speak) had reported back to him and he sent me this one fabulous example from the USA. The darter, who plays electronic soft-tip darts and games of both 501 and Cricket, wrote:

'Bob!!! Awesome you should ask! I'm doing fan-freaking-tastic!!!'

I've really worked on my confidence and have shot some amazing darts in the last few weeks. In tournament last week my partner and I was one dart away from shooting a perfect game in 501. I shot the trip [treble] 17 and missed by one hole in the trip 3 so that left me with 42. Nailed the Trip 14 on my next dart!

Then last night my league team played a team with the top two shooters in Oklahoma. I started a little shaky...missed all three darts...then hat trick, followed by ANOTHER hat trick!!! That put the opposing team on their heels and fired my team up so we were hitting on all eight cylinders last night to win 9 games to 3!!!! They were mad but came up and congratulated me and said they were happy to see [me] back throwing smooth as silk and with confidence through the roof!!!!

Then to top it off I get news that one of the places we play out of just installed five DARTSLIVE 2 boards!!! I've been watching DartsLive tournaments in Japan on Youtube for the last 3-4 years! So four of us played on those Boards last night until 1am.

I know you're probably a steel-tip player and most don't respect the soft-tip game but it's what I started on and there isn't much of a steel-tip following here. We have nearly 200 soft tip players. And it's growing every day. I have played many steel tip tournaments in my day and love the challenge and love to practice on them as well but soft-tip environment has my heart.

Any who, just wanted to share the good news...just hope I can hold on to this confidence and not fall back in to that same old rut!!! That's my problem to work on now is putting all of it behind me and never giving it another thought. Thank you so much for taking the time to reply to me. You've helped tremendously!!'

Wow! What a response and one that Bob was happy for me to share with you...and his contact nearly ran out of exclamation marks!!!!

(d) Product review – 'DartSight'

Steve 'Metalman,' who originally raised my awareness of the new training product the 'DartSight,' has written to thank me for the review.

He wrote: 'Brilliant write up, I thought,' adding, 'It's difficult to appreciate its merits in a few hours, as I found when I took it to my league match. The lads were of mixed opinions too. Out of the eight [who tried it] two found it useful on the first go. You really do need time with it.' That's true Steve.



Another DDN subscriber who read about the 'DartSight' wrote to tell me that he 'thought April Fools Day had come early.' You will recall from #45 that one or two of my friends who trialed the product thought I was having a joke with them but for a good number it worked well.

Finally, Steve added, 'There are very few darts gadgets that come up that could be considered cheap enough to be worth a punt, which is why I found it interesting enough to investigate. (For more information go to the *DartSight* website at <http://www.dartsight.com>.)

If any reader finds any unusual darts products on the market that they think are worth trialing by my team and I please send me details.

By the way, does anyone remember the ‘Inflatable Dartboard’?

(e) Charlie Ellix

In response to my article in *DDN* #45 about Charlie Ellix, I received an e-mail from subscriber Danny Desmidt who provided me with more information from his archive about Charlie’s darting achievements. Here are the details:

1974	Nodor British Open	Champion
1975	Nodor British Open	Champion
1976	British Matchplay	Quarterfinalist
1976	British Pentathlon	8 th
1976	Indoor League	Runner-up
1977	World Masters	Quarterfinalist
1977	British Pentathlon	Third Place
1977	Golden Gate Classic	Champion
1977	Marlboro Masters	Semi-Finalist
1978	British Pentathlon	12 th
1978	Denmark Open	Runner-up
1978	Elkadart London Classic	Quarterfinalist
1978	World Masters	Quarterfinalist
1978	British Open	Quarterfinalist
1979	British Pentathlon	15 th
1979	Embassy	First round
1980	British Pentathlon	18 th
1981	Embassy	First round

Thanks Danny. Thanks too to Arthur Hook for even more information.

In addition I received an interesting response from Jerry Feather from Keenesburg, Colorado who told me that the article not only brought back memories of Charlie Ellix but also of the time that Jerry came over to the UK. He wrote:

‘Patrick: Interesting about Charlie Ellix. Great article. I was lucky to see him in a match against the London Allstars. In a 3001, eight-man team game he had only two turns, both 180’s, and his team was exactly 1000 behind after his second 180.

I will check some other facts but I do remember meeting Eric Bristow at Queensway & Bayswater Road and riding in a VW bus and drinking not very cold beer in the back out of a pickle barrel. Eric was my early friend from him "chalking" at the North American (on the Queen Mary). Imagine that, Eric chalking and he said after a very long and poorly shot games against Roo Williams, a female shooter out of Dallas, that I had “Better pick it up a bit mate.”

I made top 16 and played on a board next to Eric several rounds later and Eric looked at me and about s--t, "You are still in!" That's when we agreed to meet when I went to England in October of 77.'

JOHN GWYNNE – ONE YEAR ON...

I simply cannot believe that it was over a year ago (DDN #34, February 2013) that I was the first to feature John Gwynne's notice of his retirement from the SKY darts commentary box. I recently contacted John and he told me, "I haven't missed my commentary stints on the World Championships, the World Matchplay or the Grand



Slam but I would have loved to have been at Liverpool with the Premier League: one night of darts, one day of the week, a single event and such an exciting competition."

John commentated on nine Premier Leagues. He added, "I'd loved to have been involved but it was my decision to go. Darts commentary was a big part of my life but I am still involved with sport and continue with *Soccer Saturday* on SKY. I talk at sporting dinners and am involved with rugby during

the summer. I remain a very active individual and retain an appetite for the sport."

John's first venture into TV darts commentary was for the then World Darts Council (WDC) (now the PDC) for the UK Masters which he shared with Dave Lanning. Twenty years on and John's contribution to the sport of darts was recognised by his being inducted into the PDC Hall of Fame at the Dorchester Hotel, London in January.

John told me, "I was invited to the awards night and took with me as my guest my son Andrew who is MP for Denton and Redditch and who is Shadow Minister for Health."

Marcus Robertson (pictured above with John), a PDC Director with a long-standing involvement in darts himself going back to the 1980s, spoke about John on the induction night. His induction speech is well worth publishing here in full. Marcus said:

"The man we are recognising tonight has been involved with sport, and darts in particular throughout his life. He trained and worked as a school teacher but over the years the lure of working in sport gradually took over. He started working in the Regional media in his native North-West covering a diverse range of sports including speedway, football, cricket and darts. In those early days his knowledge and love of darts was unusual in the media world and he quickly gained the reputation of being the go-to man for the vast majority of journalists who knew little of our Sport.

His distinctive voice made his darts reporting and discussion programmes on Piccadilly Radio a must for sports loving Mancunians. At the same time he was

involved in the game in many different ways which carries on to the present day – whether playing, starting the innovative Darts Line Phone Commentary, MCing, writing for Darts World, Chairing super league, being on the DRA [Darts Regulation Authority], sponsoring young players or campaigning to save the log-end dartboard, he has been there and done it!

When the WDC ran its first events with ITV we were asked to find a new Commentator to join Dave Lanning and he was the obvious choice. Quickly Sky came on board and they too added him to their team and his career at the Mic was mapped out for the next 20 years at a time it might have gone in a different direction - cricket was another passion and just as the WDC took off there was a possibility that he could have joined the Test Match Special commentary team following in the footsteps of the great John Arlott and Brian Johnston. Luckily for darts for two decades he became part of a great triumvirate in the Sky commentary box – ‘The Three Mic-ateers’ of darts – the late, great Sid Waddell, the urbane and wise Dave Lanning and this man - the irrepressible, gravel-voiced Sage of the North! Until bowing out last summer cricket’s loss was Darts’ gain – please welcome to the Hall of Fame – John Gwynne.”

Marcus Robertson told me in a subsequent interview, “We were lucky to have John in darts. He could so easily have taken another course, say into test cricket commentary. That’s how good his broadcasting voice is. I don’t think people in general appreciate just how difficult it is to commentate on live sport. John added a lot to the PDC/SKY product and, along with the other two ‘Mic-ateers’ Sid and Dave, became the mainstay of our darts commentary team for two decades.”

John was overwhelmed to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. He told me, “It was a big night in my life.” His induction meant that he joined his two erstwhile colleagues and friends and ‘Mic-ateers’, Sid Waddell and Dave Lanning, in that elite club.

I am sure that all readers of *DDN* will join me in congratulating John upon his induction into the PDC Hall of Fame and wish him many more years of involvement with sports of all kinds. What are the chances that we’ll hear John’s dulcet tones from the darts commentary box again in the not-too-distant future? I just have a hunch...

DARTS IN ENGLAND 1900-39 – A SOCIAL HISTORY

Pete R. has e-mailed me, writing, ‘Patrick, I’ve been meaning to drop you an email since finishing your book. What an interesting read it proved to be. I would recommend it to any darts enthusiast, especially those interested in the history of the game. It is a book I will certainly read again and there are not many I read twice.

STUDIES IN
CULTURAL
HISTORY Darts in England,
1900–39
A social history
PATRICK CHAPLIN



The section on fairground darts brought back a wonderful memory of a pal and me trying to win a prize on one such stall back in 1981. I’d been playing for about six months and we both thought we were quite good and could easily win something. I went first and all three of my darts died upon contact with the assortment of playing cards and landed on the floor. My mate and I couldn’t believe what had just happened and needless to say I didn’t

have a second try. It was mentioned many times over the years and always made us laugh. Thanks for bringing back that memory for me Patrick.'

Thanking Pete for his kind words about my book (and his story) I told him that I still occasionally read *Darts in England* just to convince myself that it was worth the time, money and effort to recover the history of our great sport. Pete replied, 'That's very interesting. Any historical research is hard work. Yours must have been excruciating at times. Worth it, absolutely. If you hadn't written it another generation would have passed by which time who knows what information would have been lost. Your greatest work? I've read some of your other books but *Darts in England* is your legacy. I can't wait for 1940 - 1980. Why not? With that in mind, you have my extra special good wishes.'

As some readers will know, it took me 12 years of part-time, self-funded study to achieve my PhD and another two years to 'convert' my doctorate into book form. I very much doubt that I will ever complete the story. If that was to take as long as *Darts in England* then I would be well into my 70s before I even went searching for a publisher!

However, if there's a sponsor out there who would be prepared to back me financially I might well be persuaded to resurrect my project '*The Sport of Pints – A People's History of Darts*' in which I planned to cover the history of darts from its origins to the present day. However, that would be written in a lot less serious way than *Darts in England* as I cannot see me returning to academic research any time soon.

My 'legacy,' *Darts in England 1900-39 – A social history*, is now available in paperback published by Manchester University Press at £15.99 (plus postage and packing). To buy online go to either NBN International at www.nbninternational.com or Amazon.com.

ISLE OF MAN AWAITS THE PRINCES AND PRINCESSES OF DARTNESS

Wayne Baker reports.

The countdown has started to the start of the 29th Isle of Man International Darts Festival at Villa Marina complex (pictured below) on Douglas' sea front, which runs between 6th and 9th March.

Action will get underway at the four-day event on the Thursday evening with a new rankings competition. Over the following three days there will be mixed, ladies and men's pairs competitions, the island playoffs for the WINMAU World Masters youth competition plus the prestigious men's and women's singles. Prize money for this the 29th tournament has been increased to a record £28,500 with Specsavers and Quids Inn joining those backing the tournament.



The new event on Thursday evening offers early arrivals the chance of a cash bonanza, plus BDO Category C rankings points. The men's and women's singles will

be sponsored by Okells Brewery and Specsavers respectively. Prize money will be paid down to the last 16 in each event.

Twenty four hours later and the action on the oche will focus on the mixed pairs, while under-18s eyeing up a future in the sport have the opportunity to make their mark in the WINMAU youth playoffs, with a £500 top prize and qualification to the World Masters finals in the north east of England on offer to the winner.

On Saturday the palatial Villa Marina venue will play host to the princes and princesses of darts as the prestigious men's and women's singles will be held. Many of those who featured in January's Lakeside World Championship at Frimley Green will toe the oche in what should be an absorbing encounter.

With defending champ Stephen Bunting - crowned Lakeside World Champion in January - opting to move from the British Darts Organisation to the rival PDC, it means there will

be a new name inscribed on the Manx trophy this year – but who? Martin Adams, who has never won the Isle of Man title, will be keen for a good run in the Manx title while Tony



O'Shea, Darryl Fitton and 2013 World Champ Scott Waites will be keen to make up for their disappointing performances at Frimley Green. Scotland's Ross Montgomery - winner of the Dutch Open - would like to become only the third Scot to lift the title. And much interest will focus on former Manx champ Ted "The Count" Hankey who has returned to the BDO after a spell with the PDC.

Action will be equally keen in the women's singles and defending champ and former world champ Anastasia Dobromyslova can anticipate a tough struggle to retain her title. Leading the challenge will be World Champion Lisa Ashton from Lancashire with former Manx winners Trina Gulliver MBE, Deta Hedman (seen above with Tony O'Shea and Gary Robson at the 2013 Lakeside World Championships) and Julie Gore likely to lead the challenge. (Image © 2013 Chippix. Used with permission.)

In addition to a plethora of international players - including a large contingent of Dutch sharpshooters - there will be a whole host of county players from the mainland, keen to make the big breakthrough in the sport.

For the first time there will be a cash bonus for the player - man or woman - achieving the highest checkout during the action on Saturday. The popular Quids Inn public house in Douglas is offering £250. In addition the pub will be offering a special £100 prize to the best checkout provided by an islander - whether in the men's or ladies competition. And in order to encourage islanders to test their skills in the prestigious international singles, the Steam Packet Company are offering £150 and £100 for the best performance from an islander in the men's and ladies competitions.

Tournament director Les France of LF Promotions (pictured below) said: “Although we have now been running this event for twenty-nine years, I never get tired of the tournament and every year get extremely excited and genuinely look forward to another competition. The quality of the field each year and the fact that a number of overseas internationals join the large number of players from mainland UK for the event at the Villa Marina, simply illustrates the prestige and regard everyone has for this international festival. And it is also a big thank you to the commitment and support provided by the island’s tourism team for almost three decades.

I am also grateful to the support provided by the WINMAU company for their support over the past decade, the IoM Steam Packet Company, Okells Brewery and our new sponsors, Specsavers and Quids Inn.

We have always championed the cause of women’s darts and this year there is a good prize purse for the ladies and we expect them to turn out in force to show their support to those willing to back women’s darts.

It would be nice as we approach the 30th year of the tournament that we could see a record number of entries for the 2014 festival of darts.”



To keep up to date with tournament news follow the festival’s Twitter and Facebook accounts - @iomdartsfest and <https://www.facebook.com/IOMDartsFestival>

Further information and entry details are available from 0161 793 6909 or lfpromotions501@btinternet.com

OBITUARY – TONY RIDLER

Welsh darts ace Tony Ridler died of kidney cancer on 16th January after battling the condition for five months. Tony (b. 21st January 1954) was a professional darts player for twenty years and represented Wales on no less than 39 occasions.

Described by Derek Brown (author of *The Guinness Book of Darts*) as ‘a natural talent,’ Tony won his first darts championship in Newport, Gwent, at the age of only thirteen. In 1973 he won the prestigious CIU (Club and Institute Union) Individual Championship beating Tony Sheldon of the Crayford Social Club. That same year he won through to the Grand Finals of the *News of the World* as the Wales Divisional champion, representing the Ringland Workingman’s Club, Newport.

At only 19 years old, Tony was by far the youngest finalist that year. The programme notes reveal that Tony learned his darts ‘in a young sort of way, acting as baby sitter for family friends, and practicing on a dart-board in the living room.’ At the time a self-employed builder and already married with two children, the programme told fans that, ‘This cool, calculating youngster does not go in for fancy flights, but relies on home-made paper-thin cardboard instead of feathers.’

The image (below, left) shows Tony, aged 20, playing for the West of England against Devon during which he won the Man of the Match Award. (Image courtesy of the DW/PC Archive. Used with permission.)



In the first round of that 1973 *News of the World* final, held at the Alexandra Palace, London, Tony was drawn against the USA darts ace Al Lippman. The Welshman beat the American 2-0. In the quarter-finals Tony was pitted against the Midland Counties Divisional Champion, Ivor Hodgkinson. *Darts World* recorded merely that Tony ‘fought hard but lost.’ Hodgkinson would go on to win the title.

In 1977 Tony won the Warwickshire Manns Open, beating Pontypridd’s Phil Obbard in the final. He was runner up to Derbyshire’s John

Lowe in the 1979 British Gold Cup and, with his long-time darts partner, Allan Plant, runner-up to Tony Sontag and Dave Whitcombe in the 1980 British Open Pairs held at the Horticultural Hall, London.

Strangely, as the popularity of darts continued to increase during the early 1980s, Tony seemed to disappear off the darts map. In his career, despite his undoubted skills, Tony only qualified for the Embassy World Professional Darts Championship on one occasion in 1983 when the tournament was held at Jollees nightclub, Stoke-on-Trent. Tony met Danish player Finn Jensen in the first round and beat the Dane two sets to one. He then suffered a 3-2 defeat in the second round to England’s Dave Whitcombe.

Allan Plant, Tony’s darts partner for more than ten years, recently told the *South Wales Argus*, “I was honoured to...play darts with him. It was a pleasure to know him. He was a fantastic player. Not many could get near Tony.” Of Ridler’s darts style Allan said, “He was one of the only players to play right-handed, lined up with his left eye, which was unorthodox.”

Of Tony’s proficiency at taking on the best and beating them, Allan recalled, “I remember Eric Bristow, World Number One at the time, came down to Newport and played an exhibition leg of 1,001 against sixteen people. He wouldn’t play Tony first as he wanted to get warmed up. He did in the end and Tony destroyed him, and was just two darts off the world record of taking out 1,001 with 19 darts.”

Allan added, “That sums up how good Tony was. He was a genius.”

(Sources: *South Wales Sports Argus*, Monday 3rd February 2014. Downloaded 18.02.14, *Darts World* February 1983, Derek Brown, *The Guinness Book of Darts* (1981) and www.dartsdatabase.co.uk.)

THE ONE SHOW

Readers may recall that, in the February *DDN* (page 1), I had a bit of a moan about my appearance on the prestigious prime time BBC TV programme *The One Show* being postponed, I thought indefinitely.



But I apologise for my mumbling because very late on Wednesday afternoon on 19th February, a lady named Carol phoned me on behalf of the producer of the programme to inform me that I was on *that very evening*. So, no time at all to tell anyone apart from a few family and friends. If I'd had a bit more notice I could have e-mailed *DDN* subscribers and alerted you all but it simply wasn't possible. Sorry.

The short film, which centred around the story of Brian Gamlin from Bury, Lancashire, the alleged 'inventor' of the devilish numbering system on a standard dartboard, was well made and featured Bobby George talking about the numbering and then me being interviewed by comedian Arthur Smith (pictured above, right) telling him that it was not Gamlin at all and revealing who I thought was responsible: a man named Thomas Buckle who came from the neighbouring county of Yorkshire!

VOGELPIK

Back in *DDN* #44 (December 2013) Richard Phillipson asked where he could acquire a Vogelpik board. Vogelpik is an old rural Flemish café target game which utilises a miniature archery target and small darts.

I received an e-mail from Antonie Kooren from Belgium who told me that his company (e-mail: k.sportsupply@telenet.be; website www.ksportsupply.eu) still produce and sell vogelpik dartboards.

Antonie told me that the original vogelpik dart was 'a lookalike wooden teardrop, with very long and very thin point, at the end with feathers (looks as woodpecker-head)'. He added that, 'vogelpikken' translated into English is 'bird pecking'. The actual game of 'vogelpikken' was 'played on a bunch (corded) of cut-straw with a paper-layer with circles for scoring' but later on 'the straw-bunch was pressed and a steel band secured around, with a chalk layer and coloured rings, on both sides.' The game was originally played in the north of France area, 'the former south of flanders-fields.' Antonie also told me that he has been told of a painting dating from the early 1500s which includes a vogelpik board.

Thanks Antonie.

In addition, Ian Flack, Sales and Marketing Director at the WINMAU Dartboard Co., wrote in response to the same article, "I'm not sure if this will be of use, but the Vogelpik dartboard is similar to the reverse of our Family Dart Game which your readers can find at <http://www.winmau.com/det/392/Family-Dart-Game/>. This is a paper coil dartboard and not bristle, but it may be the closest thing to the Vogelpik available here in the UK." I suspect it is.

THANKS FROM THE USA

It's always good to receive positive feedback from *DDN* subscribers so here's what Robin C. from the USA (and his darting friends). Robin writes:

'Patrick, So grateful to you for your monthly Darts News e-mail, we really do appreciate it. What we like are the facts, not tournament results, as we already in the main know these but the nitty gritty behind the players darts, stuff that you so excellently write up. It is amazing where you dig everything up from, things we would never know in a million years. And we just love the history of darts as you write it.'

Robin added, *'I have read and re-read 180! - Fascinating Darts Facts, and now it is doing its rounds. Thank you again.'*

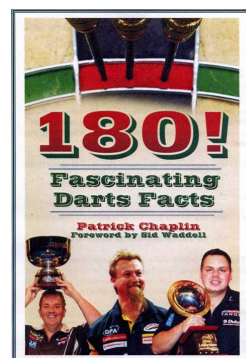
Thanks Robin for such encouraging remarks. I'll continue to do my best to bring you more darts facts and stories that you'll not find anywhere else. Perhaps that's the reason *DDN* now has subscribers in over 45 countries.

Talking of 180!...

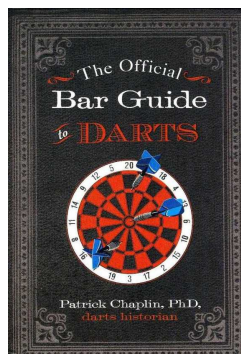
...here's my regular reminder about my books.

180! Fascinating Darts Facts

Published by The History Press *180! Fascinating Darts Facts* is available in both paperback (£7.99) and as an eBook. Copies can be purchased direct from www.thehistorypress.co.uk or Amazon.com.



The Official Bar Guide to Darts



My comprehensive work on darts published in 2010 by Puzzlewright Press (an imprint of Sterling Publishing, New York) about which Dan Peek, author of *To the Point – The Story of Darts in America* wrote, 'In my opinion, *The Official Bar Guide to Darts* is the only book on the theory and practice of the sport of Darts that anyone will ever need. Forget about the Rest – Seriously.'

Signed copies of both *The Official Bar Guide to Darts* and *180! – Fascinating Darts Facts* are available from A180.co.uk and dartscorner.co.uk. However, if you have trouble obtaining copies please contact me direct at info@patrickchaplin.com.

IN PREPARATION...

As you may be aware, I am currently working on another darts book, this time for the Crowood Press here in the UK, the text of which I am due to deliver by the end of this year. In an earlier *DDN* I asked readers to let me know what *they* would like to see in the book: perhaps a feature or aspect of playing darts which has been omitted or not

covered sufficiently in other 'how to play' darts books. So there is still time for you to let me know what bugs *you* about the existing books on the game. Please e-mail me at info@patrickchaplin.com.

CHARLES AND CAMILLA PLAY DARTS...two miles from where I live.

Yes, HRH Prince Charles and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall visited a pub in my local area to help promote 'The Pub is the Hub,' an organisation sponsored by Prince Charles with the aim of promoting and preserving rural 'locals' as a community asset.

The Royal visit took place on Wednesday 29th January when Charles and Camilla popped into *The Bell* at Purleigh, near my home town of Maldon, Essex, the Royal couple even finding time to throw a few darts. The Duchess managed to hit the board with all three of her darts but, laughing, admitted to reporters, "I'm not very good." A comment left by 'Whiley Boy' on the *Evening News* website said of the Duchess's darting technique, "It looks a bit off. Loose grip, not near her sight, but the concentration looks to be there, I'll give her that." It's amazing what you can judge from a single photograph!



Both the local and national press focussed on the darts - Royalty playing a working man's game - the *Daily Mail* (see above right, issue dated 30th January) calling the Duchess 'The Queen of Darts' while both the *Daily Mirror* and *The Sun* went for 'One's Hundred and Eighty.'

When I wrote to HRH Prince Charles back in 2007 about his supporting our sport, I received a reply from his Private Secretary, Miss Elizabeth Buchanan, which stated, "The Prince of Wales will continue to do what he can to promote darts, if only by trying to have a quick game whenever he visits pubs which are part of his "Pub is the Hub" campaign." It seems to me that he is certainly a man of his word.

For more fascinating Royal darts facts see pages 54-59 of my book *180! – Fascinating Darts Facts*.

AND TALKING OF PUBS...

For a number of years I have been in touch with Alan, a friend of mine in Lancaster who collects beer mats. Indeed he is a senior member of the British Beermat Collectors' Society (BBCS) and possesses *thousands* of beer mats and each year Alan and his colleagues raise hundreds of pounds for charity by auctioning their special and spare beer mats at their annual gathering.

For years now Alan and I have sent each other any beer mats we can get our hands on; Alan sending darts-related ones to me and me sending any type and style to him. I also collect beer mats featuring other pub games, such as dominoes and shove ha'penny.

One of my most recent acquisitions, courtesy of Alan, is one advertising Grünhalle Lager. As you can see from the instructions, drinkers are encouraged to pin the beer mat to a dartboard and then...see instructions (right), the prize being a pint of that brand of lager.

This is in fact a version of a darts game that I first played many years ago called 'Hit the Quid' where a £1 note was pinned across the bullseye and players paid two shillings (10p) to try and hit it with all three darts from those different positions. ('Quid' being a slang word for one pound.) Later when the £1 notes were taken out of circulation, the game became known as 'Hit the Fiver' and the cost to play went up to ten shillings (50p).

How To Get A Free Pint of Grünhalle.
Pin this mat to the dartboard and bet someone a pint of Grünhalle they can't hit it standing on the line, one step in front of the line, and one step behind the line.

I am very pleased that this beer mat survived being pinned to the dartboard and thank Alan most sincerely for keeping a look out for further darts-related examples for me.

I wonder if there are any other darts beer mat collectors out there. If so, why not tell me about *your* collection? Please e-mail me at the usual address.

So that's it for another month...

I hope you have enjoyed this issue and, as usual, all feedback is welcomed.

Best wishes,

Patrick

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