

DR DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue Five July 2010 www.patrickchaplin.com



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INTRODUCTION

Well, where did June go?

It's been a very busy month for me but I did manage to squееееееее in a short break in the beautiful county of Herefordshire – and of course picked up a few darts books to help to restock my Darts Bookshop on my website and some items of darts memorabilia for my ever-growing collection.



(Photo: Moppix)

Amongst the latter was a rather unusual WINMAU dartboard in a local secondhand market (see photo). Rest assured that the puzzled expression on my face is not permanent but only for the benefit of the camera! Research is underway to find out more about the dartboard so I'll report back next issue.

This month we venture into (for me at least) previously uncharted territory. Thanks to the wizardry of the 'net and the skills of my webmaster David King this latest *Newsletter* comes to you in two entirely different formats; the usual pdf and the new direct link which allows you to electronically 'read' the *Newsletter* as you would do any ordinary book. I think it's a fabulous way to present *DDN* but I would appreciate any comments from subscribers as to what *you* think of the new format and which you prefer.

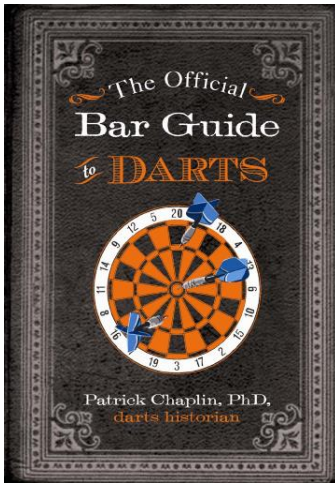
As for *DDN* in general, the list of subscribers keeps growing every week and feedback continues to be very positive. One enthusiast wrote "I think what you do is fantastic. All I can ask is don't stop" whilst other complimented me on "Another great read." If you keep subscribing I will continue to do my best to present you all with something interesting and *different* every month. Another subscriber has suggested the *DDN* be printed off 'and put up on club notice boards'. That's fine with me.

Finally I have to mention that on his website three-time World Darts Champion John Lowe describes *me* as 'historian and legend'! I feel humbled John. Thanks very much.

OK. Lots of updates and new and original material in this month's *DDN* so without more ado...

FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES

(a) *The Official Bar Guide to Darts*



Of course I've mentioned this in every issue so far but who can blame me? My latest book is receiving excellent reviews and when I checked on Amazon.com recently it stated that they had 'only one copy left' but that more were 'on the way'. My publisher is keen to emphasise that *The Official Bar Guide to Darts* can also be ordered online via the Barnes & Noble website at

<http://search.barnesandnoble.com/The-Official-Bar-Guide-to-Darts/Patrick-Chaplin/e/9781402755248/?itm=1&USRI=official+bar+guide+to+darts>

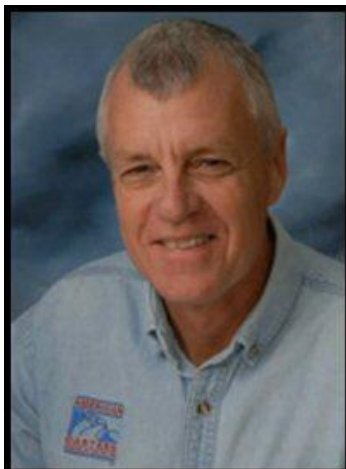
(b) Steve Beaton

In Issue 4 I was pleased to announce that yet another professional darts player, Steve Beaton had joined the ranks of *DDN* subscribers. I had asked his wife Nanette to send me an image of Steve but it arrived just too late to be included. So, as not to disappoint Steve's legion of fans it's reproduced here.



Left: 'Steve Beaton' (Image Chris Sargeant)

(c) Glenn Remick



Glenn Remick (Image courtesy of the American Darter's Association)

Following my mention of the late great US darter Glenn Remick in Issue 4, Jay Tomlinson, editor of *Bull's-Eye News*, wrote to me as follows:

'I've just finished reading your fourth Newsletter. As you can see, I'm burning the after midnight oil and needed a bit of relaxing reading as opposed to magazine content.

Anyway, Glenn Remick was *not* part of the United States

(Soft Tip) Darters Association, but rather the American Darters Association (ADA), not to be confused with the American Darts Organization, Inc. The unique aspect of the ADA is that it encloses dart leagues of both Soft Tip darts and Steel Tip darts.

While Glenn is the founding father of the American Darters Association, he was previously the owner of the Western Massachusetts Darting Association (having more than 1,000 members at times), owner of 301 Darts and Hobbies, a Board member of the American Darts Organization, Inc. (strictly Steel Tip), and an employee of Merit Industries (strictly Soft Tip).

His wife, Gloria, is currently the President of the American Darters Association and his son, Karl, is Vice President and handles most of the day to day business of the Association.'

Jay, I am more than pleased to set the record straight.

(d) Dr. Darts at the National Archive

Way, way back in the first issue of *DDN* I mentioned that I was presenting a paper entitled *Women, darts and the pub in the interwar period* at the Pub History Society's Conference at the National Archives, Kew on 20th February.

I have now been informed by the organisers that my talk is now available as a podcast on The National Archives website. If you are interested in listening to it please go to

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/podcasts/social-history.htm

(e) Cyprus follow-up

I've received substantial feedback from my mention in Issue 4 of darts on the Island of Aphrodite.

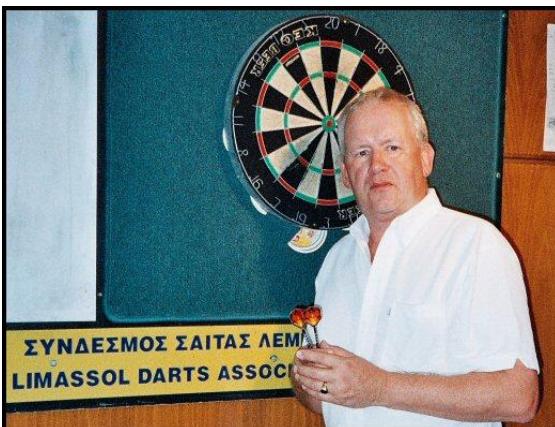
The article brought back some great memories for Humberside County Darts player Steve Hyde who told me that one of his old county teammates Steve Claxton had emigrated to Cyprus over six years ago and was having great success on the darts scene in Pafos.

Steve H. told me that Steve C. has won several competitions out there, including the Pafos Individual title. Steve H's photograph reproduced here shows Steve Claxton (in the centre wearing the black shirt) with his team mates from 'The First and Last' pub in Pafos after one of their cup victories. Steve C. now plays for Alex's Bar (also in the Pafos area).



Colin Roud has also contacted me about darts on the island but this time in Limassol. He told me:

‘Darts began in Limassol before 1970 mainly along the old by-pass road. Teams were Loftis, Lucas Bar, Green Door, George’s, Rose & Crown, Silver Fish, Red Lion, Robin Hood, Wheatsheaf, Sky Bar, Andy Capp and many more. There were three leagues at one time and tournaments were played through Saturdays and Sundays. I played for Andy Capp #1 team in 1969 and the Sky Bar 1970/71.



I have no photo of Colin playing darts in Limassol so have included a photo of myself standing around in a Limassol bar waiting for someone to give me a game. (They never did.)

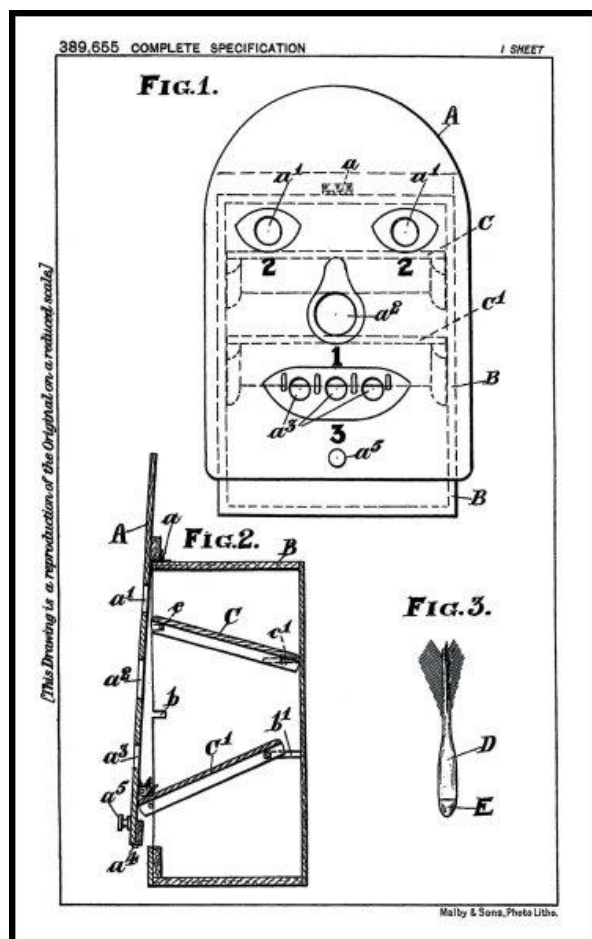
(f) Performance Analysis in darts

In Issue 3 I featured Hampshire-based Paul Giddings who had set up a sports science consultancy business and had signed up his first client PDC professional dart player Anthony Urmston-Toft.

Paul informs me that he and Anthony were recently interviewed by Charis Mutschler of 'Global Darts' and that it can be found via the following link:

<http://www.globaldarts.de/globalDartsEN/interviews/PaulandAnthony.html>

(g) Darts banned in Huddersfield



In Issue Four I mentioned an article that had been published in the *Huddersfield* [West Yorkshire] *Examiner* where I had been interviewed in relation to darts being banned in that town during the 1930s.

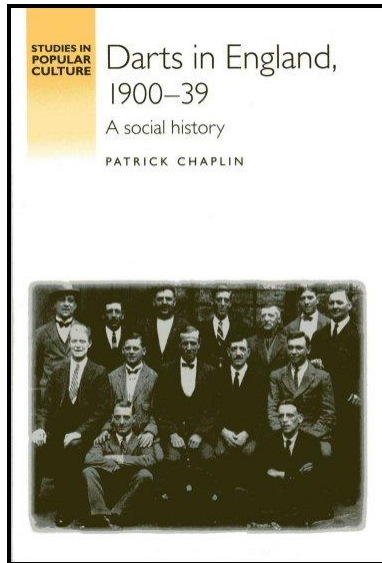
Whilst the game was outlawed many darts players went out of town to play but one licensee named Frank Johnson tried to stem the tide of emigration to other boroughs by taking out a patent in 1932 for 'Box Darts'. The darts were normal size French-style wooden darts but rubber-tipped and the 'board' was a box where the darts were thrown into holes in the box (which scored differing numbers); the darts being collected in the back.

I think this is best illustrated by showing you the original patent design and then leave the rest to your imagination. Suffice to say that it was not particularly well received!

(More information about the banning of darts in Huddersfield and other towns and cities can be found in my article "*A Growing Rage*" – Darts in 'Worktown' (and elsewhere) in the 1930s that appears in the book edited by Robert Snape and Helen Pussard entitled, *Recording Leisure Lives: Sports, Games and Pastimes in 20th Century Britain* (Eastbourne: Leisure Studies Association, 2010), pages 109-116.)

...and talking of books...

‘DARTS IN ENGLAND...’ SHORTLISTED FOR PRESTIGIOUS LITERARY PRIZE



The top news as far as I am concerned was having my book *Darts in England 1900-1939: A social history* which was published by Manchester University Press in June 2009 has been short-listed for the prestigious Lord Aberdare Literary Prize for Sports History. The winner will be announced at the British Society of Sports History (BSSH) Conference in London in September. I'll be there to hear the outcome and to present a paper entitled “‘*The same wood as we’re buried in sir*’ – *The Darts Industry to 1939*’. As Dr. Rohan McWilliam, my former PhD Director of Studies at the Anglia Ruskin University said when I told him that I’d been shortlisted, “Do remember that - as they say at the Oscars® - it's an honour just to be nominated!” Of course I will let you all know the outcome in my October *Newsletter*.

HISTORY OF DARTS IN THE USA

Mention of Della Fleetwood and Helen Scheerbaum made me wish that there is someone out there in the ‘New World’ who is prepared to undertake detailed research into the history and development of darts in the USA.

Nearly a decade ago Dan William Peek started the ball rolling in 2001 with his book *To the Point: The Story of Darts in America* (Rocheport, MO: Pebble Publishing, 2001) but someone (if not Dan himself) needs to build on that excellent foundation. I’ve recently been in communication with someone else in the States who might just be taking up the challenge. Hopefully I’ll have more news about this next time.

That leads me to the question, “What historical research into darts is being carried out in other darting countries?” Over to you...

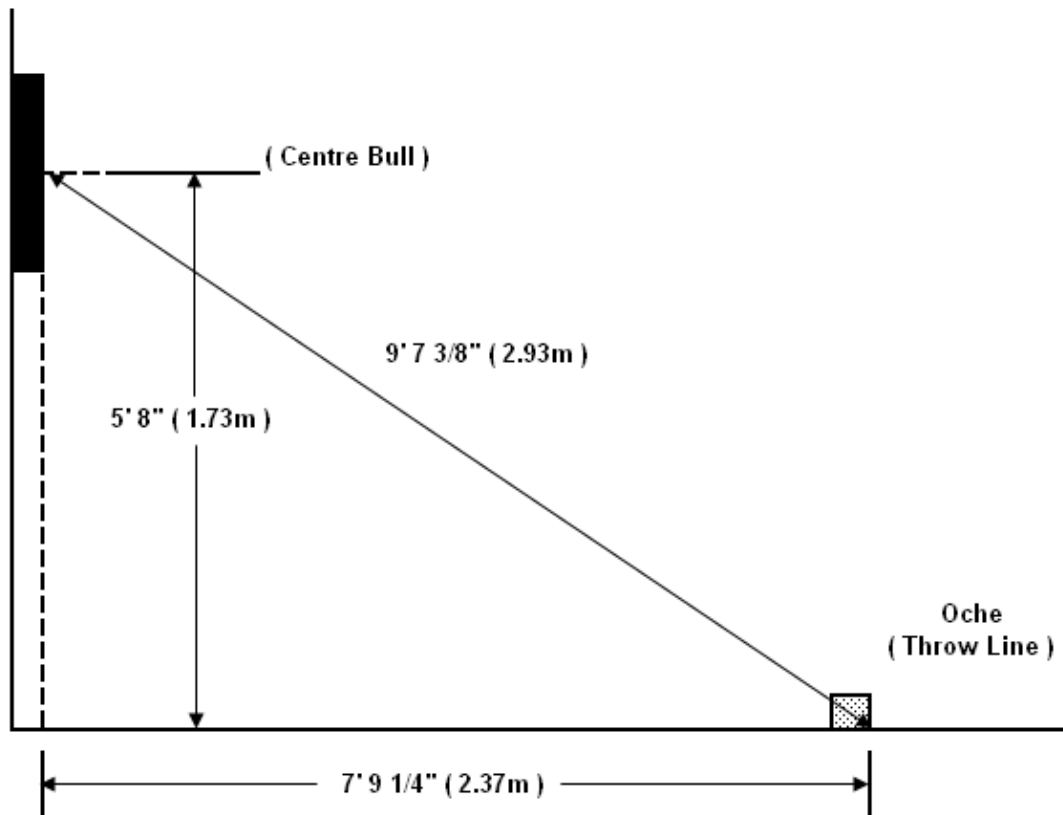
AVERAGE HEIGHT OF A DARTBOARD

During June I had cause to discuss the average height of a dartboard with an enquirer from India and a contact from Australia.

Mr. Charu from India wrote:

“Hello Mr. Chaplin, I have a query about the dart set up. I want to know that whether the dart height is kept the same for different height people?”

I advised Mr. Charu that in all organised tournaments and league darts the dartboard is always hung at the height of 5 feet and 8 inches; this being measured from the centre of the bull's-eye to the floor.



Dartboard set up (Image courtesy of David King)

The official rules state it as '5' 8" (1.73m) from floor to the centre of the bull; a plumb line from face of board to floor' and this has always been the case with the height of the dartboard since the first darts rules were published in London in 1925 and is applied regardless of the height of the darts player.

However, I added that if children are playing the game from an early age then it is, of course, sensible to not only have the dartboard hung at a lower height but also to shorten the oche (or throw line) from 7' 9 1/4 " (2.37m) to something a little nearer the dartboard.

Shortly afterwards Russ Strobel, Vice President of the Victorian Darts Council (Australia), was in touch with me concerning his invention; a wheelchair darts frame (more about this in Issue 6) but our discussion turned to the height at which a dartboard is set and I was then referred to Russ' fine publication 'Darter' (Issue 1 published in 2008), page 20. Russ was curious about why it should be 5' 8" and so applied some maths to some 'known facts' and came up with the following:

‘Statistics reveal that the average height of an Englishman has increased from 5’ 7 ½” in the year 1900 up to 5’ 10” in the year 2000. Mathematically this equates to an average height increase of ½” for each 20-year period since the year 1900.

This being the case it must surely be considered reasonable to assume that to find the average height of a man in the 1920s, when darts began in earnest, we must add ½” to the average height of a man in the year 1900...and what height do we end up with... 5’ 7 ½” + ½” = 5’ 8” (1.73m); the *exact* height it was decided to set the dartboard at during that period.’

Despite my own research I have found no primary evidence to support the theory that the origin of this height was 'the average height of a man' in the 1920s, even though I have always believed this to be the case. However, thanks to Russ another darts ‘mystery’ appears to have been solved.

THE IRISH INTRODUCED DARTS TO GERMANY

It sounds crazy but it’s true.



According to Dieter Schutsch (pictured) who was a German darts champion in the 1980s (in discussion with Charis Mutschler of www.darts1.de in 2009 (also pictured)) darts clubs in Bavaria developed out of Irish pubs; the development of the sport in Germany having little or nothing to do with the presence of either the British or American armies.

Dieter told Charis, “In the late 1970s and 1980s Ireland was somehow a favourite country of the Germans and so a good number of Irish pubs were established, selling Guinness of course and providing customers with a dartboard.” The owners were mainly German. And while there were indeed British and American darts clubs these were quite separate, Dieter confirming that he never played darts in a club in Munich alongside British or American players.

German darters always played straight in, double out 501. Initially (in the 1970s) a Munich league was set up, followed later by a Bavarian Darts Organisation and then later still the DDV. From the beginning Dieter played using tungsten darts. He never used anything else although he does recall some darters playing with darts ‘with shafts and flights in one piece’.

Dieter remembers that around 1984 the first dart shop opened in Munich where players could purchase all



the necessary equipment they needed together with videos of top British players. He also recalls some of the more well-known top players coming to Munich and giving exhibitions. At that time the best continental darts players Dieter told us came from Sweden, Denmark and Belgium. Dieter added that during the 1980s Munich was always a centre for steel-tip darts with no soft-dart machines seen anywhere.

From the beginning women darts players were included in the league but Dieter said, “Though rarely in the first team.” adding, “They did some administrative work too for the clubs and in those pubs if they had a landlady she would become involved too.”

So there you have it. The Irish are to blame for bringing darts to the attention of the German nation, *not* the English.

(My thanks to Charis Mutschler and Dieter Schutsch.)

PER SKAU – DENMARK’S FINEST



Per Skau in 2009 (Image courtesy of Per Skau)

In Issue Four I reported on Canada’s Bob Sinnaeve returning to the oche after nearly twenty years. This time Danish international Per Skau, who ceased to throw arrows in the top flight in 1996, is reported to have taken up the sport again.

Per was born in Farum, Denmark in May 1968 and played darts for the first time at the age of 16-17 years at his mum and dad’s pub “Gasen” in Assens. Per’s parents started at darts club at their pub in the mid-1980s and remain on the committee to this day.

A few years after taking up the sport seriously Per made the semi-finals of the Swedish Open, a tournament he was to win in 1993. That year was one of Per’s best as he also won the Viking Masters and the Swiss Open in 1993, the latter including a nine-darter in the quarter-finals against Walter Tschudin; the first perfect game ever to have been recorded in Switzerland. Needless to say *Darts World* magazine celebrated this achievement by featuring Per on the front cover of the July issue with the catchy, yet predicable, headline ‘Per-fect 9-darter’. The accompanying *Darts World* article described Per as ‘Always the perfect gentleman, both on and off the stage’ adding ‘Per leaves the theatricals to others.’

One of the most theatrical darters was (and is) of course Eric Bristow and there is a statement on the BBC Sport ‘Sports Talk’ website blog where a guy named Stuart Smith claims that ‘Eric Bristow once headbutted his opponent, Per Skau in a darts match.’ I asked Per about this alleged incident and he replied, “I have never been head-butted by Eric Bristow but I think that he thinks of an episode at the Embassy when we were not

the best of friends.” Let’s hope this head-butting non-incident does not become another myth in the sport that becomes fact.

Other achievements by Per include quarter finalist in the WINMAU World Masters in 1991, Finnish Open champion 1991, appearances at the Embassy World Championships 1991-1996 and German Open champion in 1994. Per’s record in the Danish Premier League was also impressive. In 1992 he played 88 singles matches and won 82 (93.2%) with a ‘winning legs average’ of 27.76 per dart.

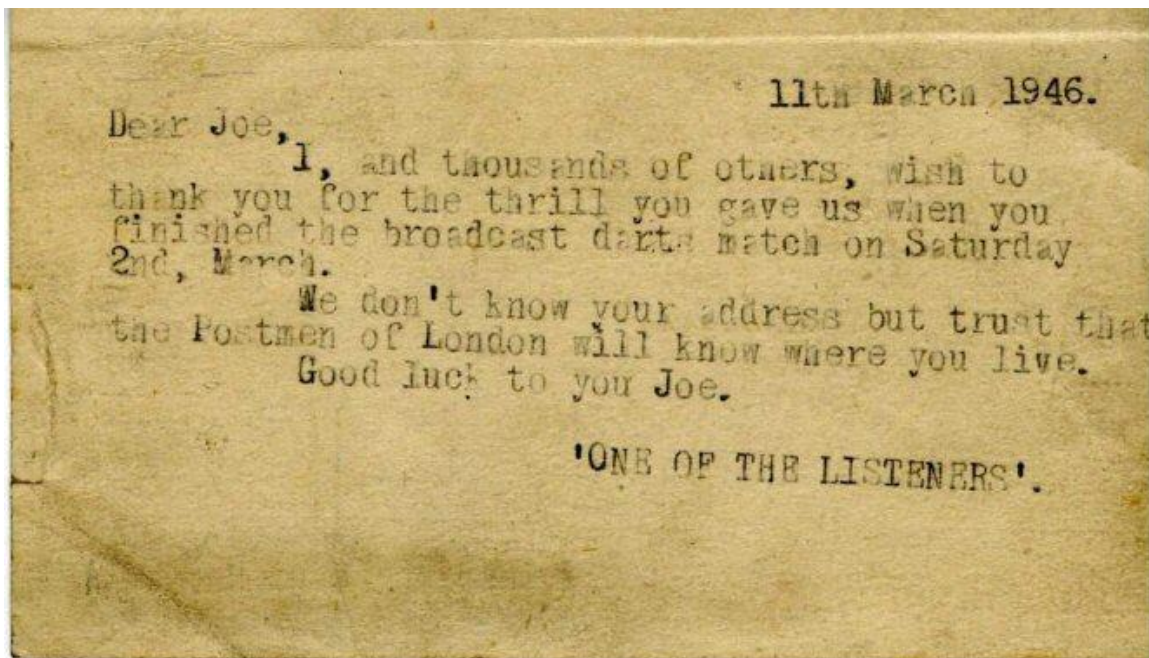
Per ‘retired’ from the darts circuit in 1996 and nowadays plays for the Assens Darts Club (previously the Gasens Dart Club) on a monthly basis. Per told me, “I’ve also played a few tournaments and won one but I only ever play in Denmark.” Per has certainly earned his place in the Darts Hall of Fame as one of the top players to come out of Denmark.

Next month: Sweden’s Stefan Lord.

JOE HITCHCOCK’S FAN MAIL

A couple of issues ago I promised to include in *DDN* a darts image that has never been seen before in any publication anywhere.

Back in 1946, the legends that were Joe Hitchcock and Jim Pike played some memorable darts matches in front of packed houses at top venues. Pike was sponsored by the *News of the World* Sunday newspaper whilst Hitchcock was backed by a small darts newspaper called *The Dart*.



In March 1946 the two Titans of the post-war game met at the Acton Town Hall and Hitchcock emerged the winner. The match was broadcast on the radio and one excited

fan wrote a postcard to Joe to congratulate him. It was addressed simply to 'JOE HITCHCOCK, THE WORLD'S BEST DART PLAYER, LONDON.' The legend on the back of the postcard (reproduced here) reads

11th March 1946

Dear Joe,

I, and thousands of others, wish to thank you for the thrill you gave us when you finished the broadcast darts match on Saturday 2nd, March.

We don't know your address but trust that the Postmen of London will know where you live.

Good luck to you Joe.

'ONE OF THE LISTENERS'

The 'Postmen of London' forwarded the postcard to the 'News of the World, E.C.4' which was of course the *wrong place*! However, I am pleased to say that the postcard was eventually passed on to the editor of *The Dart*, the late Frank Wolfe, and that the item is now in my archive. A unique piece of darts history I think you will agree.

BRITISH CLASSIC COMES TO ESSEX

The town of Braintree, in my home county of Essex is host for the first time ever to the BDO British Classic and the Teenage Open (which have transferred from Kettering) and will be held at Towerlands on the weekend of 24th/25th July.

Unfortunately I will miss the Classic but will be attending Teenage Open on Sunday 25th. It should be an excellent showcase for darts. Perhaps I'll see *you* there.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY GLEN



I cannot leave this issue without wishing my great friend Glen Huff (President of the Emerald City Darts Organisation, Seattle, Washington, USA) a very happy 50th birthday on 26th July.

Glen and I have never actually met or even spoken on the phone but we have been in regular contact through our mutual love of the sport of darts for over twenty years and across those years and 'the Big Pond' we have become firm friends. (The photo of Glen included here shows Glen (left) a few years back with the legendary Barry 'The Man Who Taught The World To Play Darts' Twomlow.)

Perhaps some day I'll come a knockin' on your door and take you down to the bar for a few games of '501'. In the meantime my good buddy, congratulations on achieving the 'Big 5-0'.

COMING UP IN ISSUE SIX

Well that's it for Issue Five. I hope you've all enjoyed it.

As usual I whet your appetite for more of the same by setting out some of the proposed content of Issue Six. Here we go...

- An interview with former Swedish darts star Stefan Lord
- Aussie Russ Strobel tells us about his revolutionary patent wheelchair dart frame
- John Lowe's book translated into Danish. Was that a 'first'?
- Patrick Dee – Is this the world's *only* darts museum?



Patrick Dee with Patrick C (Image: Chippix)

- The Lightning Darts Scorer
- Darts on 'The Rock' (of Gibraltar)
- Even *more* about darts on Cyprus

AND FINALLY...



On 22nd July I will have achieved the ripe old age of 60 which my wife Maureen insists makes me officially an 'old man'. It is true that I will receive a free bus pass from my local council and a heating allowance and can officially qualify in some quarters as a 'concession'. Also on that date I will be able to receive a 10% discount at my local do-it-yourself store.

However, I don't *feel* as though I'm sixty and certainly hope to be delving into the history of our great sport for a few more years yet.

Cheers for now!

Patrick Chaplin

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