

# DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 67    December 2015



## ANOTHER DARTING YEAR OVER

Well that's not really true is it as, of course, we have the two World Championships fast approaching which will, once again, show that both the British Darts Organisation (BDO) and the Professional Darts Corporation (PDC) players can produce the goods at the very top level. Those events will doubtless raise again the debate about which is best and why there should be only one 'World' champion. (Tell that to the boxing fraternity!)



As you all know, my focus is, and always has been, the recovery and recording of darts history; information that you will rarely find either on television or even on the internet. It's always a pleasure for me when I either track down great darts players of the past or, as in this case, they contact me.

Thus I am pleased to reveal that Neil Campbell Adams, former Scottish international and Scotland's *News of the World* Divisional Champion 1977 (pictured above with the *News of the World* trophy (Image courtesy of the *Darts World*/PC Archive)) and now resident in the USA, has recently subscribed to *DDN*.

I've really enjoyed bringing my discoveries to you this past year and hope that I will be able to continue doing so for the foreseeable future. The WINMAU Dartboard Company Ltd., has recently confirmed their support of my research for another year which is much appreciated. Thanks too to you all for your interest in my work, especially to those who have responded to various issues over the past twelve months. It's always great to receive your feedback.

And, of course, a very Happy New Year to all my readers across the world. *DDN* is now read in over 100 countries!

## DR. DARTS AND THE MEDIA

In issue #66 I mentioned my being interviewed by Talksport radio as part of a two-hour programme titled *Golden Arrows*. I provided a link for anyone who wanted to listen to it. Unfortunately, the programme was only available via that link for a short time so some of you who tried to access it found nothing there. But, problem solved. Mark Crossley, who interviewed me, has uploaded the show to his own website so you can still listen in at

<http://mark-crossley.co.uk/2015/09/06/golden-arrows-on-talksport/>

I have also received a visit from a TV producer and his team who are planning a major documentary about the sport of darts. It seems that they want me to become

involved on the history side. Hopefully I'll have some more information for you in the early part of next year.

### THE ST. DUNSTAN'S FOUR – JIMMY CLOW

On 23<sup>rd</sup> November I travelled the short distance from my home to the studios of BBC Essex, my local radio station to do an interview with a sister station BBC Radio Merseyside. I was sat in a studio and awaited the call from Billy Butler who hosts the afternoon show.

I had written a letter to the editor of the *Liverpool Echo* asking for readers' memories about the visit to that city of Jimmy Clow in 1947 and Billy Butler's producer had picked up on it and contacted me. Jimmy was a regular member of the St. Dunstan's Four, a team of sighted darts players set up in late 1945 by north London café owner Harry Allen to play exhibition matches to raise funds for St. Dunstan's, a charity established to care for blinded ex-servicemen and women, recently renamed Blind Veterans UK.

Captained by the legendary Joe Hitchcock, the team, modelled on the highly successful *News of the World* Team of Darts Champions (captained by the equally legendary Jim Pike) comprised some of the very best darts players drawn from the north of the capital including Johnny Bartlett, Sid Howes, Bill Jacobs and Jimmy Clow (pictured below right, second from the left, with tie and Joe Hitchcock, extreme right). (Image: Ray Clow.)

It was Jimmy who interested me on this occasion. Last year his son Ray had contacted me to talk about his dad's darting exploits and to give me a small plaque inscribed *Presented to Mr. Jimmy Clow from the "Darts Public" to commemorate his visit to Merseyside 25-30 Aug 1947.*



Up until then I had no idea (perhaps naively) that members of the St. Dunstan's, except of course for Joe Hitchcock undertook solo exhibitions. Yet here was Jimmy visiting Merseyside for a *six-day* tour.

Sadly the lengthy interview with BBC Merseyside produced no information (as yet) about this great London darter but it's set me on the trail to discover more about him.

A more successful 'Letter to the Editor', this time to the *East Anglian Daily Times*, has produced some fascinating information about the late Eddie 'Teddy' Brown who won the *News of the World* Individual Darts Championship in 1962 (for obituary see *DDN* #65, October 2015) which I will publish in a future issue.

### JIM PIKE – THE NEARLY MAN OF THE NEWS OF THE WORLD?

I know that sounds a harsh thing to ask about one of the greatest English darts players that ever lived but it is a fact that Londoner Jim Pike was always the nearly man in the *News of the World* darts championships.

Pike (pictured below, left) is such a familiar name to English darts fans both young and old that many believe that he *did* win the *NoW* at some stage. However, I have to confirm that, although he reached the last two twice, in 1935 and 1939, he failed to lift the trophy on either occasion.



In the 1934/35 season, the *News of the World* competition was still restricted to what the organisers described as the 'London Area.' However, this was to be expanded from the following season to embrace the Home Counties.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1935 a report in the *News of the World* revealed the names of the eight players who would contest the finals, the only ones remaining from an entry of nearly 1,600. Among them which was 'J. Pike', representing the *Hope* public house, Carshalton.

By the following week, the draw had taken place and the line-up for the first round of the finals was declared as follows:

F. Webb (London Transport Omnibuses, Wilsden Garage) v A. Coletta (*Upper Welsh Harp*, Hendon)

W. Forecast (*Duke of York*, Bow) v O. Hales (*Bakers Arms*, Hackney Road, Bethnal Green)

P. 'Nipper' Richards (*Hanbury Arms*, Islington) v J. Pike (*Hope*, Carshalton)

G. Branch (*Beehive*, Tottenham) v S. T. Shean (*Crown*, Camberwell)

Both George Branch (nicknamed 'The Tottenham Terror') and F. Webb had reached the last eight before. Branch had also been runner-up in the 1931-32 tournament to the renowned darts player and darts and dartboard manufacturer Jack Hood. Hood had beaten Branch 2-0 on that occasion to take the title.

A subsequent report stated that Pike had 'been in the last 16 before' but I have yet to track down the details of that or any other appearance by Pike in the *News of the World* prior to the 1934/35 season. William Forecast was reported as being 'much fancied by the East End' to win whilst O. Hales had apparently beaten many fancied players on his way to the final.

The venue for the 1935 final was *The Horns*, Kennington. Records indicate that *The Horns* was extant as a drinking place circa 1760 but was rebuilt as the *Horns Tavern & Assembly Rooms* in 1891 which included an enormous concert room which is where, I assume, the *News of the World* final took place. Indeed the accommodation must have been of a great size as 853 paying customers attended the finals with officials and special guests taking the total crowd to 1,000. The price of a ticket to see this display by London's best dartsmen was two shillings (10p) 'numbered and reserved' and one shilling (5p) unreserved.

It was Pike and Forecast who met in the final.

Pike had beaten 'Nipper' Richards 2-0 in the quarterfinals and had then defeated F. Webb 2-0 in their semi-final. Meanwhile Forecast had accounted for O. Hales 2-0 in his quarterfinal and George Branch 2-1 in the semi-final.

Jim Pike was favourite to win the title but it was not to be. The *News of the World* special correspondent report declared that the Pike v Forecast encounter was 'The biggest success of the series.' The reporter wrote:

*...the winner of the championship was W. Forecast, a 27-year-old bricklayer's labourer...who beat J. Pike...in the final by two games to nil. Forecast is not so lucky outside the game as he had been unemployed for six months. He had been playing darts for six years and it was only the second time he had entered for the News of the World Championship.*

*He did extremely well to beat Pike as the runner-up possesses a fine record. Pike, who is 35 and is employed as a hydraulic diecaster at a metal factory, won the Club and Institute Union tournament three years in succession and won the cup outright. He also won the London Business Houses Championship in two consecutive years and reached the final in the third.*

Because of this impressive record of successes in two of the most prestigious darts tournaments at the time and his greater experience, Pike was described as 'a good favourite' to win the final. Pike seemed to be living up to his reputation...

*...and he appeared a certain winner in the first game until Forecast nipped in with a wonderful 135 – the highest "break" of the night.*

*The atmosphere was electric when both men required 60 and Forecast sent a thrill through the very sporting spectators by getting the necessary points with three darts – 20, double 1 and double 19.*

*Playing with supreme confidence, Forecast made a hot pace in the second game and he wanted 16 when Pike, after a gallant recovery required 56. Forecast gave nothing away, in fact he found the double 8 with his first dart.*

*Bad luck Pike! A good sportsman, he turned to the audience and declared that a better man had won.*

Forecast was presented with the *News of the World* challenge trophy to be held for one year, together with a replica cup for him to keep permanently. Pike received the runner-up's silver cup and all eight players who reached the finals were presented with a gold medal each. The eight players who were defeated in the previous round were also given a medal. Prizes were presented by Mr. H. Aldridge, the Managing Director of the *News of the World*.

So the *News of the World* title had eluded Pike on this occasion but, of course, he lived to fight another day although the task ahead of him looked daunting as the newspaper's 'Special Correspondent' announced that the competition was to be expanded 'to embrace the Home Counties next season.' Indeed the expanded tournament was to attract 12,471 entries; many thousands more than the London Area

competition had done and as the 1930s came to a close the entries would exceed all of the organiser's expectations. Interestingly, the correspondent also reported

*The electric darts board is almost a fact. I have seen a board that displays a light when a dart enters a certain segment of the board, various coloured lights nominate certain shots and happenings on the board. The cleverest invention of darts I have seen so far but hardly the thing for competition play.*

So no future for electronic darts then...

**In Part Two to be featured in the January issue I will report on Jim Pike's next appearance in the finals of the *News of the World* which took place in 1939 and reveal why, after the Second World War, Pike was not allowed to enter the competition ever again.**

## **JACK HOOD – NU-DARTS**

In the last issue I recorded the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of Sally Hood, daughter of Jack Hood, the well-known East End of London dartboard and darts manufacturer. This reminded me that back in August my good friend Darren (DartsNutz.net) contacted me about a set of Hood's darts he had acquired which, to say the least, were unusual.

Called the "Nu-Dart" (pictured right) this invention of Hood's featured a 'Brush Flight' which was 'fitted to prevent the expense of constantly replacing flights'; a dart which 'proves to be truer than the ordinary flights.' Hood's promotional flyer for the product further professed that 'No matter how the Dart is pulled out of the board, or if a Dart hits the flight, it does not hurt the flight whatsoever.' (Image © [www.dartsnutz.net](http://www.dartsnutz.net). Used with permission.) Hood also stated that 'These Darts have proved to be the most accurate of all by some of our well-known champions.' Of course, Hood himself was a well-known champion, having won the *News of the World* championship in the 1931/32 season.



Hood further stated that 'This Dart will answer all the requirements of Dart-players as every part of it screws together, even to the screw point, so that if any part is lost or broken it can be replaced' adding 'The spare parts for these Darts are always kept in stock.' The darts were priced at three shillings (15p) for a set of three. However, they were also available either in a 'well-finished case' (3/6d) (18p), as pictured above, or a 'Special Bakelite Case' for four shillings (20p). The 'Nu-Dart' was available in a selection of colours, cream, red, brown, green, and black.

The darts also carried a warning from Jack Hood which read:

*When removing and replacing the flight into the Dart always turn it as if left-handed thread. If you turn to the right you will automatically undo the bristle and destroy the flight, but these can be obtained from us or our agents at a low price.*

When Darren first sent me the images of the ‘Nu-Dart’ I realised that I had seen a dart some time ago based on a similar principle but not of the professional quality of



Hood’s product. Searching through my archive revealed a pen and ink drawing of what I can only describe as a ‘needle and thread dart’ of unknown age and origin. Sadly all I have is the image and no further details. The image (left) shows an ordinary needle used as a dart with the thread through the eye being the stabiliser; the target (a miniature archery target) drawn on a wall. (Image: Author’s private collection.)

Simple but effective and one can see where Hood’s idea for the ‘Nu-Dart’ *may* have come from. (Eagled-eyed viewers of darts on ITV Sport may well have seen a similar projectile before the break for adverts; a normal dart with ribbon instead of a flight.

What year the ‘Nu-Dart’ first made its appearance on the market I have yet to ascertain but I’m currently guessing either immediately post-WW2 or the early 1950s. A search of the Patent Office has yet to reveal the exact date Hood’s patent was registered. I will undertake further research but if anyone can help with the provision of more detail, please contact me at [patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com](mailto:patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com).

## **DARTS. SKILLS. TACTICS. TECHNIQUES.**

Thanks to all those who have already purchased my new book *Darts. Skills. Tactics. Techniques*. There’s still time to order a signed copy from me in time for Christmas. For details of how to order see below. It seems as though darts fans are enjoying the book.

Peter Yeomans, a darts player and fan, who purchased my latest book wrote to me to say:

*Having received my copy today via Amazon may I take this opportunity to praise the book. It has given me a lot of information and may I praise u on a fantastic book.*

Jim MacNeil, who is currently researching the history of darts in Scotland, found time to drop me a line to say:

*Patrick, Thanks for the book. It’s read already and full of great information as usual. Normally I am not too keen on books about techniques etc. but it’s a good mix of solid advice and interesting facts*

Charis Mutschler of [globaldarts.de](http://globaldarts.de). has posted her review which can be found at:



<http://www.globaldarts.de/globalDartsEN/misc/bookspraxis.html>

I met up with Charis in Hull at the WINMAU World Masters in October so was able to thank her personally for her excellent review.

With those recommendations why not treat yourself to a copy of my book? Failing that it would surely make a great birthday or Christmas gift for any darts fan. With the festive season approaching *Darts* would make a super 'Secret Santa' wouldn't it?

All the details you need can be found at [www.crowood.com](http://www.crowood.com) or by e-mailing me at [info@patrickchaplin.com](mailto:info@patrickchaplin.com) but anyone in the UK wishing to purchase a signed copy can do so by sending me a cheque for **£16.00** (which includes postage and packing) made payable to 'Patrick Chaplin', and sent to me at **50 Norfolk Road, Maldon, Essex, CM9 6AT**. Please ensure that you include your name and postal address and, if you would like a specific dedication, like me know what to write. For readers outside of the UK wishing to purchase a signed copy, please contact me at the e-mail address above.

And please don't forget that signed copies of my previous books *180! – Fascinating Darts Facts* and *The Official Bar Guide to Darts* are also available. Just send me an e-mail for details.

## **ISLE OF MAN FESTIVAL OF DARTS 30-YEAR-OLD ASSOCIATION ENDS**

Sad news indeed the news that a 30-year association with an established and respected darts promoter and organiser of the prestigious Isle of Man Festival of Darts has ended.

Earlier this year, the organisation of the event was put out to tender by the island's Department of Economic Development and in October Les France, of LF Promotions, received the news that his long connection with a tournament that he (and hundreds of people in the world of darts) saw as 'his baby' was over.

Now in his 90<sup>th</sup> year, Les was still actively involved with the Festival of Darts, held annually on the Isle of Man, but had largely handed the organisation over to his son Steve. Learning of the news that the company had lost the tender, Steve told *Isle of Man Today*:

*When dad originally set up the tournament back in 1986, a binding contract was drawn up between his company, Lesco Promotions, Isle of Man Tourism Department, the Palace Group and the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company. As far as he was concerned, that same written contract was still in place until last April when we received an e-mail stating that the event was being put out to tender.*

*We were shocked and disappointed as the festival is by no means a major earner for us, it is more of a personal thing in putting on a successful event. As far as dad is concerned it's his baby.*

The original Festival of Darts was won by Alan Warriner (now Warriner-Little) who later became the BDO and World Darts Federation (WDF) Number One.

Liz Fletcher Wright in her recent *Around the Circuit* column in *Darts World* revealed more, facts, writing in the December issue

*From the information we were given the tournament was put out to tender and the Lescol tender was not accepted. It seems very strange that after 30 years of loyal service building the tournament up, including the struggle to get ranking points (which alone took fifteen years) that it should come to this.*

*It certainly leaves a sour taste in the mouth that anyone could do this to a well-established tournament and make a bid to take it over from Les and Steven France. We have since heard that the EDO [England Darts Organisation] along with Howard Miller managed to secure the tender and they are now running the IOM Open.*

*It would have been common courtesy to have told Les and Steven that they were going for a tender. This spells the end of an era for Lescol, but they can rest assured that they created a great tournament from nothing.*

On behalf of darts fans and players everywhere I thank Les and Steve for 30 years of the IOM Festival of Darts; an event on the darts calendar that many darts players aspired to. I wish them both well in their future endeavours.

#### **THE YORKSHIRE DARTBOARD – CAN YOU HELP?**



Despite my best efforts I cannot find anyone who can tell me what height a Yorkshire Board should be hung at (centre of bull to the floor) or the throwing distance (plumb line from the bullseye to the floor and then to the oche). It may be that the rules vary from place to place but that still doesn't explain my inability to track down this information. Please contact me at [info@patrickchaplin.com](mailto:info@patrickchaplin.com) if you can help. Many thanks.

#### **AND FINALLY...**

All the best to you all for 2016 and beyond.

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