

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 76

Also August 2016



WHY I DO WHAT I DO

Whilst preparing Issue 75, I found myself, as always, in the pleasing position of having more material than would fit in the standard eight-page *DDN*. Normally I would have simply carried the surplus forward to the next issue. However, on this occasion, given a specific question I was asked, I have decided to produce a special *DDN*.



This is mainly because the answer to one question raised needed more space to discuss than I would normally allow in a scheduled *DDN* so I am publishing this 'extra' issue.

Since the very first *DDN* I have often had to answer the question as to why and how I ever became involved in researching darts; a game I have been playing for over fifty years and studying for over thirty. Usually I respond with a couple of lines to each enquirer but on this particular occasion I've decided to explain to all *why*.

This decision was prompted by my very good friend Dr. Eddie Norman, a man very knowledgeable about all things darts; a man who travels the world spreading the word of darts across the globe. So this special issue is mainly (and perhaps unusually) about me, my work and my books.

Eddie wrote to me recently to say that he had been caught out!

After lecturing more or less continuously on the sport, especially since his alleged 'retirement' in 2003, Eddie has been able to answer any question thrown at him by members of his audiences about darts, darts equipment, the darts business and darts history. That is until he was lecturing in the USA earlier this year. Eddie (pictured below, right) wrote:



Patrick, I had a query raised from the floor last night here regarding Dr. Darts no less.

I was displaying your last edition of DDN with hard copies I had printed off and was explaining that you did all this work yourself. I spoke on your books for ten minutes. At the Q and A [Question and Answers] session a guy who had been quiet all night, asked "Could I tell the audience a little about how you and why you decided to choose darts as your study?"

I told the audience about your PhD in Darts. They were fascinated and loved it but, Patrick, I was stuck when I was asked, why you chose darts.

First time in my life at a lecture – Stuck.

They asked if you were a professional player. I said no; just a keen pub player. How many people wrote DDN? I explained one (you) and an unpaid proof reader!!! The audience were amazed at your knowledge and books. I referred them to your website www.patrickchaplin.com.

I have promised to get back to the guy with an answer for him about why you chose darts. Can you enlighten me a little? I have never given it any thought until I was asked last night.

I have been asked many times “Why darts?” but have never fully explained it to DDN readers. I thought I would do that now. The information that follows comprises elements of my detailed reply to Eddie plus minor amendments and adjustments and some additional facts. I trust it will be of interest to you my readers and that it explains why I do what I do.

I have played darts since I was 12; first on a Scott’s coiled paper dartboard in my bedroom at home and then in the pub on a proper bristle dartboard from about the age of 15. I am a sociable, recreational, pub darts player and have been now for more than 50 years. I never had any allusions of being a professional player. The thought never, ever occurred to me. I was never of that standard. I just enjoyed (and indeed still enjoy) playing darts with my friends.

When I married in 1973 my wife Maureen and I moved away from my hometown of Maldon, Essex to the county town of Chelmsford. When we returned a few years



later, I joined the darts team of the *Blue Boar* (a Trust House Forte hotel) a few minutes’ walk from my new home. I made some lifetime friends there. In fact playing for the *Blue Boar* changed the course of my entire life.

(The photo, right, shows the bar at the *Blue Boar* that we played in *but* this image is from the

1920s, pre-darts. Note on the extreme right of the photograph the edge of a quoits or ‘rings’ board, to be replaced during the 1930s with a dartboard (of similar dimensions) as the game became more popular. Sadly the *Blue Boar* no longer has a dartboard.

It was also great fun. We often played home and away matches with other local pubs; friendly matches only. Nothing serious. Just enjoying the darts and the company.

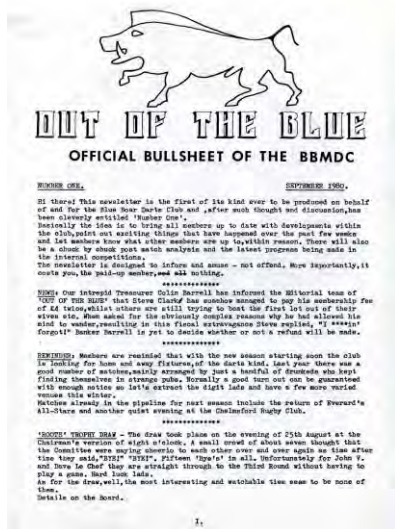
The team not only enjoyed themselves each week playing darts and quaffing pints (and occasionally involving wives and girlfriends in matches and events) but also helped raise funds for good causes.

One year during the early 1980s the team held a 24-hour darts marathon *and* a sponsored bed-push to raise money for the provision of a special greenhouse for use by the elderly patients of the local St. Peter's Hospital. The marathon raised £600 and the bed-push £420. The photo (below) shows our then Chairman, John Vincent, handing a cheque for the proceeds from the darts marathon to patient Basil Bentley while other patients and the *Blue Boar* team look on.

The young-looking bloke at the rear of the group standing right in front of the dartboard with arms folded and darts in hand is the future 'Dr. Darts' and next to me (on my right as you view the image) is Colin Barrell; more of whom later...



As I have always enjoyed creative writing, one day I came up with the idea of producing a (more or less) monthly newsletter to hopefully amuse and inform fellow team members and others about what the Club was all about or had been up to. The first issue appeared in September 1980 (see image, left).



I was editor, main contributor, cartoonist and publisher of *Out of the Blue – The Official Bullsheet of the Blue Boar (Maldon) Men's Darts Club*, a newsletter in which I provided match reports, hearsay, forthcoming events, jokes, a darts dictionary and fragments of darts history. I also produced special annual 'Beano' issues for our 'gentlemen's day out' be it to the races, the seaside, a city pub crawl, etc.

At the time there was a dearth of books on darts history so anything I published in that respect was usually 'borrowed' from Derek

Brown's *The Guinness Book of Darts* (Enfield: Guinness Superlatives, 1980). Derek's book was probably the only darts book I had in my possession at that time. The *Bullsheet* lasted for thirty-two issues, the final one being published in May 1988.

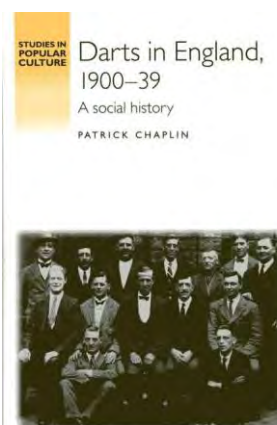
It was as a result of including historical notes in the *Bullsheet* (as the Newsletter was more popularly known) that I started to research the sport. It happened like this...

In 1985, after I had handed out the latest issue of the *Bullsheet* to club members present, my best friend Colin Barrell said to me, "This history stuff is fascinating Pat but what are the *real* origins of the game?" Thinking the task a piece of easiness I confidently replied "Give me a couple of weeks mate and I'll find out."

More than 30 years, and a PhD and *eight* dart books later here I am still researching darts!

What started out as an apparently simple question actually determined my life's work and eventually, in 2006, led to me being awarded a PhD at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge after 12 years of part-time, self-funded, research. The book of my PhD, *Darts in England 1900-39 - A social history*, published by Manchester University Press in 2009, sits proudly on the open library shelves at the six top universities in the UK.

Earlier, in 1999, I was persuaded by a good friend of mine in Essex County darts, Sheila Handley, to have a website created. I was dubious and totally ignorant of anything to do with computers, and was thus unsure that it would serve any purpose. Sheila was insistent and set it all up for me. I thought 'Darts History' should be the site name but Sheila was clear that www.patrickchaplin.com was best in the long term as she believed that I would make a name for myself in my unique chosen field. And so it has proved.



My newsletter *DDN* was created on a whim in late 2009, the purpose being to keep a handful of fans informed of aspects of my on-going research and, hopefully, to entertain and even to occasionally amuse. My webmaster at the time was David King (of Darts501 fame) and he helped me through the technical difficulties of setting up *Dr. Darts' Newsletter* and also promoted the arrival of *DDN* on his website.

The first issue was launched quietly in February 2010. The second issue was dated 'March/April' and, although I intended *DDN* to be 'occasional', from Issue Three (May 2010) it became monthly save for no newsletter being published in January for a couple of years. (My excuse being that I was resting up after the rigours of the World Championships!) Gradually more and more people contacted me to subscribe and that growth has continued.

More than six years on *DDN* now circulates across the globe reaching out to nearly 150 countries; further than I ever imagined. The global readership can be measured in thousands. Much of this success is down to Dr. Eddie Norman and his travels across the world on the lecture circuit and his mentions of my work, my books and *DDN*.

As you all know, *DDN* is absolutely free and, apart from the banner for my research sponsor WINMAU, is, and always has been, advertisement-free. Although I had been in contact with the company for some time, WINMAU approached me in late 2006/early 2007, just after I was awarded my PhD, offering sponsorship of my research. My special working relationship with that company, and in particular with Sales and Marketing Director Ian Flack, will reach its tenth anniversary next year and, of course, I am extremely grateful for the company's continued support.

I still maintain that you will find nothing like *DDN* on the internet except on my website www.patrickchaplin.com which features numerous darts history articles and some of the very early editions of the newsletter.

As for my 'production team', although many people seem to think that I actually employ a number of staff, there is, in fact, only me, plus of course my wife Maureen who performs the dual role of morale-booster and proof reader.

DDN, like Eddie's lectures, is enlivened by Q & A. There is nothing worse than producing the latest issue of *DDN* and receiving no reaction to what has taken me many hours to research and write up. I have always encouraged feedback and *DDN* subscribers regularly provide enough for me to engage with them by e-mail and then publish the results (with their permission) in my newsletter; sharing their questions and queries and my answers with (it seems sometimes) the whole planet!

What better way to spread the word of darts?

My work, I guess, is my legacy: the only man in the world (so far) to bother to research and discover the true history of one of the most popular pastimes in the world. Academics and others have told me that, without my work, the history of darts would have surely been lost. Positive responses to *DDN* from my readers makes me feel good and gives me the strength to carry on but for how much longer I am unsure.

So that's the full story. Darts is my passion. I play it, I research it, write books and articles about it and even occasionally lecture folks about it.

I talk a good game!

I trust this answers the question "Why Darts?"

PUBLICATIONS

Another question I am often asked is "How many books on darts have you published?" For all of you, there follows an up-to-date list of my darts-related books, thus far.

2005

Old Stoneface – The Autobiography of Britain's Greatest Darts Player (with John Lowe) (London: John Blake)

2008

Golden Girl – The Autobiography of the Greatest Ever Ladies' Darts Player (with Trina Gulliver) (London: John Blake)

2009

Darts in England 1900-39 – A social history (Manchester: Manchester University Press)

Old Stoneface – My Autobiography (with John Lowe) (Updated paperback version of John and my 2005 book.) (London: John Blake)

The Art of Darts (with John Lowe) (London: Hodder & Stoughton)

2010

The Official Bar Guide to Darts (New York: Puzzlewright Press)*

2011

Scoring for Show, Doubles for Dough – Bobby George's Darts Lingo (with Bobby George) (Clacton-on-Sea: Apex Publishing Ltd.)

2012

180! – Fascinating Darts Facts (Stroud: The History Press)*

(*Darts in England 1900-39 – A social history* is published in paperback.)

2015

Darts. Skills. Tactics. Techniques. (Ramsbury: The Crowood Press)*

Please note that signed copies of the books asterisked (*) are still available direct from me. For more information contact me at patrick.chaplin@btinternet.com.

I hope that you have enjoyed this extra issue of *DDN*. You now know all about the road which led me to this very point.

DDN will be back to normal in September.

MY DARTS RESEARCH IS SPONSORED BY



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