

DR. DARTS' NEWSLETTER

Issue 81

January 2017



WELCOME

...to the first *DDN* of 2017. I trust you all enjoyed your holidays and saw in the New Year in fine style.

I wonder how many of you were given the DVD *House of Flying Arrows*. If you did then please let me know what you thought of it. Others would have received darts-



related presents, including my books, but how many of you would have been given the darts sets pictured here?

cabinet, in two middle-class UK magazines' Christmas gift guides and sent them to me with the comment "HOW MUCH???"

Alan Gardner from Lancaster, England found this set by Jonathan Adler, comprising dartboard, darts and

One example comes from the Jonathan Adler catalogue, the other from an unidentified but similar source. So, take another look and ask yourself "How much?" How much would *you* pay?

The answer can be found on Page 8.

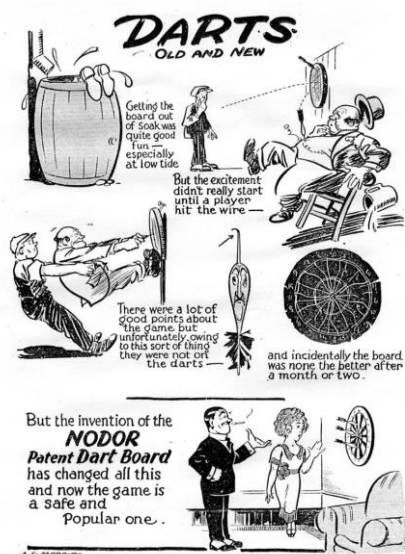
CLOSING IN ON A CENTURY IN THE BUSINESS – NODOR CELEBRATES ITS 95th ANNIVERSARY

NODOR, the oldest darts brand in the world, issued a special press release at the end of 2016 to celebrate the company's 95th anniversary. A slightly revised version of the article, written by Sales and Marketing Director, Ian Flack, with a little help from me, is reproduced here.

The company was formed in 1921 by an industrial chemist, Edward 'Ted' Leggatt, in London's East End. Back then, Ted had little interest in darts. His product was modelling clay, specifically a formula he invented which, unlike that of his major competitor had 'no odour', hence the company name.

It would take another two years before the first NODOR dartboard (manufactured from clay) made an appearance, but it did not prove very popular in an era when elm boards were the norm, as it lacked the familiar “thunk” of a striking dart. (The image, right, is of an advertisement for the ‘new’ NODOR Patent Dart Board, dated 1925. © NODOR International Plc. Used with permission.)

Still determined to exploit the sport’s popularity, Leggatt started making elm dartboards during the mid-to-late 1920s and introduced a range of brass darts. However, the clay board continued to be produced, being called the “Home” dartboard, for ‘family use’ in the style of a miniature archery target. (See below, left, as advertised in a wholesaler’s catalogue dated 1929.) (Image © NODOR International. Used with permission.)



It was during this time that Leggatt became a member of the newly-formed National Darts Association (NDA) which had been established in London in 1925. The Association had adopted the pattern of dartboard featuring doubles and trebles as ‘standard’. This was to become known as the ‘London’ or ‘Trebles’ board. Leggatt was later to become the President of the NDA.



The company’s strapline later became “The First and Still the Finest” and this relates to the fact that NODOR patented the bristle dartboard in 1932; the product that changed the face of darts forever. The example of the use of this strapline can be seen on the next page. It is taken from *Darts World* magazine dated August 1979. The word ‘still’ was added later. (Image ©1979, NODOR International Plc. Used with permission.)

Frank Dabbs, a Kent publican, approached Leggatt with the idea of producing a board made from short pieces of rope bound vertically and formed into a circle. Leggatt and Dabbs worked on the design over subsequent months and then Leggatt applied for a patent which was registered on 12 September 1932 and completed and accepted on 12th March 1934. The NODOR Original Bristle Dartboard was launched the following year; an innovation that helped shape the sport as we know it today.

The company went from strength-to-strength and, when Leggatt finally retired and sold the business to his brother-in-law, Fred Grisley, NODOR relocated to Cardiff, South Wales in 1968. The company remained there until 1983 when it was acquired by current owners, the Bluck family, and relocated to nearby Bridgend, Mid-Glamorgan.

A year later in 1984, John Bluck, whose Brackla Engineering company was already a leading manufacturer of tungsten darts, was responsible for another major NODOR innovation – the staple-free bullseye dartboard marketed as “Supabull” which took the market by storm. The current edition of this pioneering bullseye (which removed the staples holding the wire in place and so dramatically increased scoring) is the Supabull 2, and it features on the complete line of NODOR premium bristle boards.

Today, 95 years on, NODOR is still one of the most recognisable names in darts and is the largest contract manufacturer of tungsten darts in the world with customers in more than 100 countries. But it will always be known as the inventor of the modern dartboard, and the brand still thrives in this marketplace with contracts in place as the official supplier to the American Darts Organisation (ADO) and the National Darts Federation of Canada (NDFC).

“NODOR has a heritage that few companies can match, regardless of the sport they are associated with,” says NODOR’s, Sales and Marketing Director, Ian Flack. “Our roots are the very foundation of the modern game and I have no doubt that the company will be going strong when it reaches the ton, and far beyond.”

For details of the NODOR portfolio, please visit:
www.nodor-darts.com.

It is very rare to find any company records of darts and dartboard manufacturers that were established before the Second World War. Indeed the majority of those formed post-war are fraught with similar difficulties.

It was during research for my PhD (*Darts in England 1900-1939 – A Social History*) that I was able to piece together the history of NODOR (est. 1921), Jack Hood (est. 1925) and Abbey Sports (est. 1899, turning to darts c. 1925). Each individual history was compiled from interviews with surviving family members and much delving in dusty company, brewery and licensing victuallers’ archives across England.

All three companies, plus a number of other smaller darts and dartboards manufacturers of that era are featured in Chapter 6 of the book based on my PhD with the slightly amended title *Darts in England 1900-39 – A social history* and published by the Manchester University Press in 2009. (The paperback edition was published in 2012 and is still available.)



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However, there was one other major darts company established during the interwar years and that is Unicorn Products Ltd. This company was founded by Frank Lowy in 1937 and celebrates its *eightieth* anniversary this year. What is unique about this company is that it has stayed in the same family right up to the present day.

A brief history of the formation of Unicorn is also featured in *Darts in England...* but I hope to be able to provide a more comprehensive history in a future issue of *DDN*.

In the meantime, **HAPPY 95th NODOR!**

WINMAU WORLD MASTERS

My wife Maureen and I attended the last two days of the WINMAU World Masters at Lakeside on the weekend of 3rd and 4th December courtesy of my sponsor and we had a great time and saw some great darts thrown.

Congratulations to the winners who all deserve a mention together with the runners up. In the Youth-Girls Masters the title went to Veronika Koroleva (Russia) (See left



on the right) who beat England's Beau Greaves. The Youth-Boys title was won by Netherlands' Justin van Tergouw who was victorious over England's Owen Maiden. (See left, on the left.)

Glen Durrant (England) retained his Men's Masters title in an excellent contest against fellow England international Mark McGeeney whilst the Women's title went to England's Trina Gulliver, Trina beating her England colleague Deta Hedman in the final.

Praise too for Belgium's Vincent D'Hondt, (right) who retained his WINMAU World Disability Darts Association (WDDA) title by beating England's Richard Green 3-0 in the final on the Lakeside stage. (Images © DG Media. Used with permission.)



I must mention here Sarah Smale of the British Disability Darts Association (BDDA) who was responsible for organising the WDDA Masters tournament. It was right and proper that she received a deserved round of applause as 'Little' Richard Ashdown announced her presence to the Lakeside crowd.

Congratulations to one and all but particularly to Trina Gulliver who won her sixth WINMAU Women's Masters title having first won it in 2000 and then had a run of four consecutive victories 2002-2005. What made this win more special for me was that, for once, Trina was not seeded and had to come through numerous group matches to qualify for the finals. Thus she is a *true* World Master.

NEWS OF THE WORLD SNIPPET – MEMORIES OF THE 1969/70 FINAL

Way, way back last summer, subscriber Tom Firth, e-mailed me after reading issue #73 (June 2016) which featured a brief history of the *News of the World* Individual darts championship. Tom wrote:

Always great to read your Newsletter Patrick especially about the NoW competition which have held fond memories for myself for years.

In the year 1970 I ventured to Alexander Palace (or Ally Pally) and I went as a youth aged only 20, to the most famous competition of them all, the News of the World. I went up there with a crowd of darts players from the King's Head in Blakenall, Walsall, Staffordshire.

Representing Walsall was John Taylor [who was the Midlands Divisional champion that year], a namesake of my cousin who played dominoes rather than darts. John Taylor, the darter, was playing out of the Jolly Collier in Brownhills. [The photo, below, shows John Taylor (left) being presented with his divisional trophy by Ron Bacchus, Publicity Manager for the News of the World. Photo: PC Archive.]

After a bit of a pub crawl we ended up at Muswell Hill for the most important event of the day.



John played well enough in front of a crowd of around 12,000 and I can still recall he did not miss the twenty segment once. But it was not good enough and he went out to the eventual winner for 1969-70, Henry Barney from the Pointers Inn, Newchurch, Isle of Wight, on this very short format of darts, throwing from a distance of eight feet.

I have played in many qualifying games with varying success/failure in Ireland. My wife and I went over to the Hammersmith Odeon (1975-76) when Billy Lennard from the Cotton Tree Inn, Manchester beat Leighton Rees from Ynysybwll United Services Club, Pontypridd, Glamorgan, Wales, 2-1. That was to support Shay O'Brien from Dublin who I played with on a team and against for many years.

I did not venture to Ally Pally again but travelled over from Dublin in 1996-97 with my son Marc when Phil Taylor from the Cricketer's Arms, Newcastle-under-Lyne beat Ian White from the Dockside Inn, Runcorn, 2-0. Unfortunately that was demise of the News of the World.

Thanks Tom.

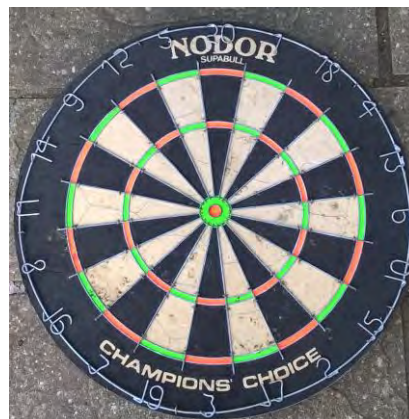
CHAMPIONS CHOICE – FOLLOW UP

In issues #78 I featured the 'Champions Choice' dartboard, the main feature of which is the reduced size doubles and trebles. In *DDN* #79 I included some follow-up about

that board and then recently, while thumbing through some back issues of *Darts World* magazine I found the following piece by ‘Marksman’ (editor Tony Wood) in the issue dated December 1979 titled ‘Monster scores.’ ‘Marksman’ wrote:

The famous “Nessie”, the Loch Ness monster, is taking a very poor second place at the moment to darts.

The local darts enthusiasts have made a discovery of their own. It is the Champions Choice (pictured right) dartboard, the new clock board which has half-width doubles and trebles.



The Champions Choice board is now being used in tournaments in the Drumnadrochit Hotel which overlooks Loch Ness. And in spite of the size of the board, I hear reports of “monster” scores.

Taking part in the tournament, Barry Mackay from the Caley Club, in nearby Inverness went out on 132 (25, 57, bull); he also hit the first 180 registered on the board.

THE SECRETS OF DARTS – THE GOLDEN RULES

This is the time of year when people buy books and especially annuals as presents; something that has been going on for time immemorial.

I recently came across the *Sunday Pictorial Sports Parade* annual for 1950 which, unusually for the time, included a section on darts by sports writer George Casey. In his article titled ‘Don’t Get Your Feet Wet at Darts’ (a reference to having your toes over the hockey or throw line) Casey revealed that ‘the secrets of darts are merely the golden rules of all other sports’. He wrote:

First keep your eye on the ball. The ball in the darts sense being that number, be it treble, double or single, that you are aiming for.

Perfect an easy stance whether you throw cock-eyed, from the right or the left or from dead centre of the board.

Learn to count automatically. Some people can add up but never subtract properly. Subtraction and knowing the remaining score when near the double is vitally important. Get to know the combinations of trebles, doubles and singles which leave a throw at that all-important leg or match-winning double.

Always use your own darts and keep flights well-groomed [It was mainly feather flights back in the late 1940s and early 1950s.] and the points nicely sharp.

Now go to it...

That was sound advice back then and, apart from grooming your flights, it seems sound advice today.



Carey spoke of darts having ‘gone a long way since the days when a player who threw “arrows” was considered something lower than a snake’s belly’ claiming that ‘Today, even the best houses boasts a darts board and pride is often shown by a delicate young thing who knows that “two old hens” means that she wants double ten and that “Kelly’s eye” is one.’

He also mentioned that, in recent years, darts had risen from the tap-room to the status of ‘a modern sports entertainment at Wembley or Empress Hall, Earls Court’ which had given the game ‘a touch of class.’ Note that Carey, who was writing for the *Sunday Pictorial*, does not mention the *News of the World* darts tournament that was held at those venues as the *NoW*

was the *Sunday Pictorial*’s main competitor.

The cartoon, above, by ‘Berryman’, that accompanied Carey’s article shows a darts-playing country yokel, complete with straw in mouth and darts in hand stating how grateful he is that there was to be no ‘powerful overseas challenge’. However, within Carey’s article there is no mention of any imminent foreign invasion.

However, a few years earlier, top dartsman Jim Pike, in a chapter on darts in *The Sports Book* (compiled by James Rivers and published in London by Macdonald & Co. Ltd. in 1946), had written not of an ‘invasion’ from abroad but of the game growing in popular appeal internationally, so much that he had been assured by those in the know that ‘inter-country matches on an ambitious scale are contemplated.’ (The photo, right, shows Jim Pike (centre) with fellow darter Leo Newstead at an exhibition in Scotland during the 1950s. © PC Darts archive.)



Pike understood that a Britain v America match at the Madison Square Garden, New York, ‘is a likely happening in the early future and should prove a contest worth watching.’ He added, ‘The Americans who were with us during the war years quickly took to the game and many of them qualified for the [*News of the World*] Treble 20 Guild.’ Pike reported in his article that the last *News of the World* tournament held at the Royal Agricultural Hall, London in 1939 drew an audience of **17,000** people; a record that still stands today. (For more on the Treble 20 Guild see *DDNs* 77 and 78.)

Pike insisted that it would be a simple matter to select a representative team to oppose a British team, also pointing out that ‘the U.S. is not the only country likely to be concerned in international matches’, identifying Belgium, France, Holland, Poland, Czechoslovakia, South Africa ‘even Australia and New Zealand’ who now have ‘experts in abundance.’

As far as I am aware, the Britain v America match did not happen ‘in the early future’, failing to materialise until the 1970s, and then it was held in an English pub and not a large venue. However, I could be wrong...

Jim Pike wrote few articles about darts during his illustrious career. He never wrote a book about the game which surely would have been a darting best seller. So, in terms of advice on how to play, all we can resort to are the concluding lines of his article in *The Sports Book*. Short and to the point he recommended that you:

Keep your head up and practice throwing from the wrist and elbow. Don't move the body more than you can help.

HOW MUCH???? (From page 1)

Described as hitting the gift-giving bullseye the Toulouse Dartboard is described as, ‘Crafted using a multi-step hand finishing process that creates a marbled oil drop effect, this turquoise lacquered dartboard is full of eccentric details. Velvet lined back and metallic gold screen printed graphics on the interior panels make this the perfect glamorous gift.’ So no wonder the Jonathan Adler darts cabinet, dartboard and darts cost **£295** in the Adler catalogue but a **massive £355** in a major London store!

AND FINALLY...

My thanks to Pub History Society colleague and friend Alan Gardner for sending me this cutting from the *Sunday Times* dated 16th October. It speaks for itself yet I never thought of a Nobel Prize winner ever playing darts!

“Hey Mr. Nobel prize man, play some darts for me...”



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