

# DR DARTS' NEWSLETTER

ISSUE

17

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Issue 17 (August 2011).



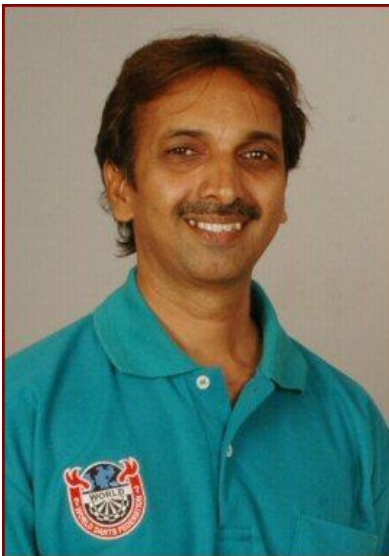
In a packed *DDN* the main feature is the story of Stan Allen, a maker of elm dartboards in Oxford, England from the 1950s until the early 1970s. The majority of early dartboards were constructed of either elm or poplar wood and remained the standard until they were replaced by bristle dartboards in the late 1970s. In this issue I also look at darts-related car registration numbers.

I would like to say a special “Welcome” to all those who have come on board and subscribed to *DDN* over the past month. These include Tony ‘Silverback’ O’Shea. I’ve met Tony on a number of occasions including the 2010 Lakeside World Professional Darts Championship where he posed for this photograph. Welcome one and all.

Let’s go...

## FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES

### (a) The Official Bar Guide to Darts



It’s always a pleasure to receive positive comments about any of my books but I was especially pleased to hear from my friend, and former India National Champion Ashfaque Sayed (pictured). We had been talking about how he could improve his game so I sent him a copy of my *Official Bar Guide to Darts* and here’s what he had to say:

“Finally I managed to complete reading this lovely book of yours which you kindly sent me. I thoroughly enjoyed it. It covered all the basics so well and so clearly by all novices as well as mid level players like me who have to be reminded of the great nuances of the game.

I thoroughly recommend it to all darts lovers. I specially related to two lessons viz ‘Staying Cool’ and ‘Dartitis’ and of course Chapter 5 [*Improving Your Game*]. I am off to my board for practice. The monsoon has taken over my city. It’s raining cats and dogs but this gives me an opportunity to be indoors and play darts. Thank you for the lovely book which will be treasured by me for Life.”

Thanks Ashfaque. Let's see you win reclaim your National Championship title this year.

### (b) Badge Collecting

Back in *DDN* #12 (March 2011), I featured badge collecting which included mention of the John Lowe International Super Dart Club member's badge. For that issue John was good enough to provide some details about the club and stated that it 'goes back to the 80s.'

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John's autographed tungsten superdarts. Complete with wallet and 6 sets of flights  
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The J.L.S. Sweater  
colours: Navy, Sky, black, red, green, brown  
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52", 54"  
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**"Next Month". The J.L.S.C. introduce a fantastic ENGLAND sweater.**

Then, purely by coincidence, while I was researching the Tony Brown article for *DDN* #15 I came across this advertisement for John's club in the October 1980 issue of *Darts World*.

The advert helps to clarify for collectors exactly what the benefits were of becoming a member. It also reminds us of pre-computer days when photographs often had to be cut and pasted into advertisements!

### (c) TEX Darts

**TEX** Darts Australia  
A.C.N. 005 483 287



International Standards exceeded with our unique  
95% Tungsten Nickel & Steel Alloy, Computer designed,  
super precision machined and meticulously balanced  
**AUSTRALIAN MADE DARTS**

Tex Manufactures, Imports & Distributes a full range  
of dartboards and accessories

Following mentions of TEX darts in issues 14 and 15, Trevor Purcell, General Manager of Formula Sports Australia Pty Ltd., has written to me with information relating to origins of the company.

According to Trevor's sources a gentleman named Cyril Arthur Viner arrived in Australia from the U.K in 1946 and set up a company which originally went under the

name of C.A.V. Sales Company Pty Ltd., located at 845 Nepean Highway, Moorabbin, Victoria. Cyril brought with him what Trevor believes was most probably the first commercial supply of darts into the country. The company would later be renamed TEX. (The advertisement shown here was featured in Peter Grahame Anderson's book *The Aussie Guide to Darts* (1990).

Thanks to Trevor, I will be able to feature a brief history of TEX in a future issue of *DDN*.

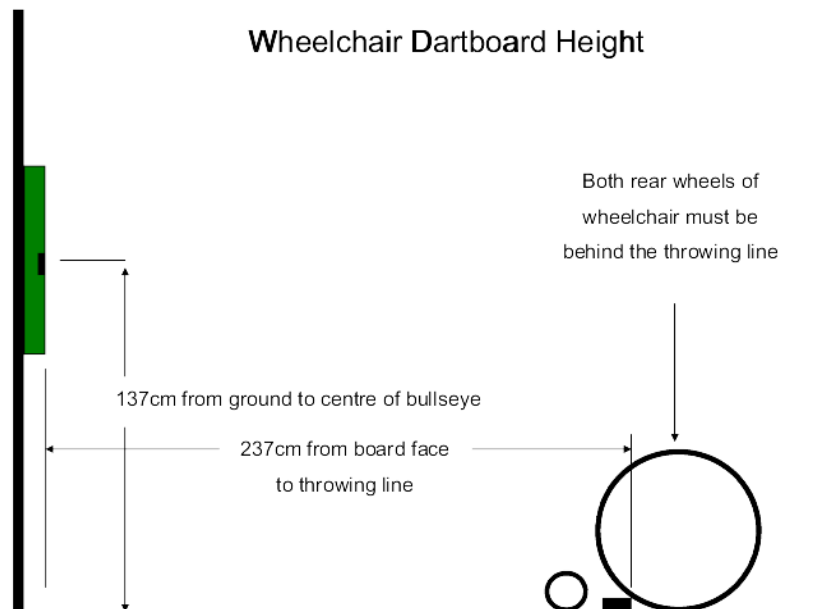
#### **(d) Wheelchair Darts**

This theme has been explored in several issues of *DDN* but an enquiry from Sharon of Chichester, Sussex has brought the issue to the fore again. Sharon wrote to tell me that her husband is wheelchair-bound and to ask a seemingly simple question (that I couldn't answer) which was "What is the correct position that a player in a wheelchair should be at the oche?"

I went straight to the expert on such matters, Australia's Russ Strobel. He told me:

"Wheelchair players may have front wheels in front of the oche but both rear wheels must remain behind the oche. As their pivot point is their hips (and all body parts below of no advantage) it is the fairest position. This allows a range of throwing positions comparable to able-bodied players.

To have made a ruling that required front wheels *behind* the oche would have meant having to throw from a non-equivalent distance; the only option would be to throw side on or throw (comparatively) from some distance behind the oche. Most in my experience opt to have one front wheel over the oche at 45 degrees to the dartboard."



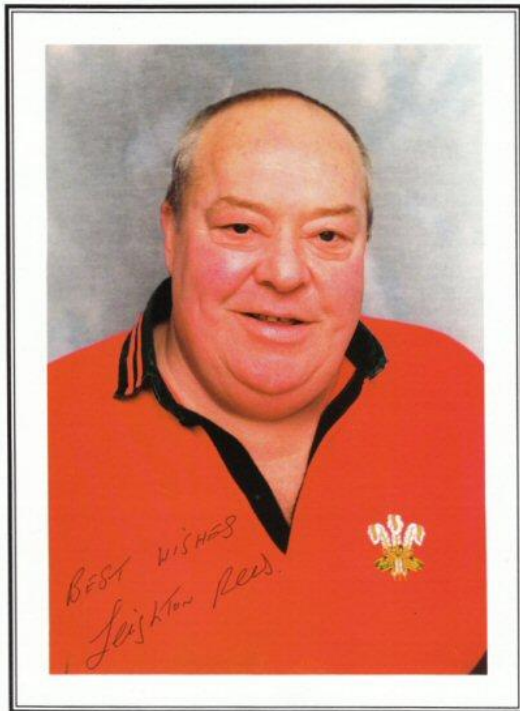
To illustrate his point Russ has been good enough to provide an image of the wheelchair dartboard set-up. (Image and design ©Russ Strobel.)

Russ continues to work relentlessly on his passion to improve the lives of wheelchair darters. He has a top-level meeting with important darts people later this year. I am keeping details of that meeting under wraps for now, until Russ has more to tell us so watch this space!

### (e) Darting comic strips

In the last issue ((b) Most expensive darts book...) I included a response from Chris M where he mentioned featuring Jocky Wilson in a comic strip in a psychedelic fanzine called *The Positive Energy of Madness*. Following up on the 'comic strip theme' Eddie N. dropped me a line. He said:

'You wrote about a comic strip for John Wilson and did any one know of any other strip. In about 1977/1978 I used to occasionally feed the *Sunday People* darts information. There was a guy who worked on that newspaper in the sports section as a cartoonist called Trevellion (?). I'm not sure of the correct spelling.



Anyway I was talking with him one day and the subject came up and we discussed Leighton Rees and he thought that he would be ideal for a cartoon strip as a one-off. So he drew one and it was in the *Sunday People* sports pages. (Like Jocky, Leighton was an excellent subject.)

The original was presented by me to Leighton at a county match. Alan Evans ribbed him for months about it.'

I've never seen the cartoon but I am hoping that someone out there has. Otherwise I can see myself wallowing in the archives at the British Library trying to trace it. If you can help, please contact me via my website [www.patrickchaplin.com](http://www.patrickchaplin.com).

In the meantime enjoy another image of the late great Leighton Rees. (Image reproduced with kind permission of Leighton's son, Ryan)

## DARTS CAR REGISTRATIONS

You've probably all seen images of John Lowe's car number plate **301 UP** which was presented to him by his sponsors British Car Auctions some years ago. There is also the premier plate **D4RTS** which I believe is owned by someone within the darts goods industry. My car registration is **DAR161T**; not as well known as John's of course but it was featured on Japanese TV a couple of years ago when a crew came over and filmed me for a programme called *Darts Night*.

Delving in an ad hoc way into my *Darts World* archive I discovered that in 1995 a gentleman named Alf Rigby, from the Isle of Man wrote to Tony Wood, the then editor, as follows:

"A few years ago I read in your magazine about John Lowe with his car reg. no. 301 UP and Keith Deller with his KD 138. This started me looking for the Manx reg. no. A180 MAN. After a long search I have acquired it to go with this year's Super League trophies of runner-up in the individual play-off and runner-up in the fastest leg with a 14-darter."

Alf then provided a photograph (shown here) of himself with his restored Triumph Stag. (Image courtesy of PCDW Archive)



I was unclear what Alf meant about the number plate and where it was actually going. I certainly have no idea where it ended up. I am uncertain if Tony actually published Alf's letter but if any *DDN* reader can help trace its current owner then that piece of information would bring this 15-year old story to a satisfactory conclusion.

If you know anything please contact me via my website.

### **BULLSEYES GRANDFATHER?**



A few months ago my good friend and subscriber Mat C sent me a copy of the obituary of Keith Fordyce. British readers will remember Keith as the compare of the hit pop music show *Ready Steady Go* in the early-to-mid 1960s. However, what intrigued Mat about the image published of Keith was the rather unusual dartboard which can be seen in the background. (See image – Source: *Western Daily Press*, Monday April 4, 2011, *Register* page 7.)

In my view the dartboard looks a little like the possible grandfather of Bully's Prize Board on the top darts quiz show *Bullseye*. But this board has twelve segments (a la fives board) and no outer bull (like the Yorkshire Board). Above the top segment is a reel-to-reel cine camera (presumably indicating the 'film' category), next to that a globe (possibly 'world affairs'), beneath the bottom segment is a pint glass, a bread roll and some cheese ('food and drink') and next to that a Dalmatian ('animals'). Other segments in view suggest 'music' and 'sport'.

So, it had to be an early quiz dartboard but who made it and was it ever connected to a show that Fordyce appeared in?

Thanks to my webmaster David King, the mystery appears to have been solved. David told me that on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1968 BBC Channel 1 introduced a programme called "Quiz Time Gentlemen Please!" where 'Pubs competed with darts and general knowledge.'

We're still not sure if this *is* the programme that featured Keith Fordyce and the dartboard shown in the photograph but it's a start. If anyone can help further on this (or maybe even remembers watching the programme) please drop me a line via my website.

### **SPECIAL FEATURE - STAN ALLEN – ELM DARTBOARD MAKER**

During a recent delve into my archive I found a snippet in a back issue of *Darts World* from 1971 which announced that 'With 27 years of dartboard-making behind him, Howard Allen of Oxford has decided to retire...' The company was called 'H. S. Allen (Dartboards) Ltd.' and was described as a 'one-man business' based in Jericho Street in that city.

The article further informed me that, in his early days, Mr. Allen produced what he believed to be 'the first [*dart*]boards with inlaid wiring'; something that is very common today but certainly was not back then. There was little other information provided but what I read made me curious.

As Mr. Allen seemed to have been a pioneer of this innovative ‘inlaid’ form of dartboard construction I was keen to learn more about him so I wrote to the editor of the *Oxford Mail* asking if his readers could help.

Thanks to readers of the ‘Memory Lane’ feature in the *Oxford Mail* the information they have provided has enabled me to reconstruct the history of H. S. (popularly known as ‘Stan’) Allen’s company. (All place names mentioned in this article relate to areas in and around the city of Oxford.)

John Allen (no relation to Stan) from Kidlington, who used to write a weekly darts column ‘Darts Notes’ for the *Oxford Mail* told me that Stan arrived in Kidlington at the end of the Second World War and found lodgings at the Red Lion public house in Oxford Road. The landlord at the time was Ted Gomm.

Stan set about making pull-along toys in an outbuilding of Smith’s timber yard in Lyne Road and when John Allen was demobbed he joined Stan. It was about this time that Ted Gomm mentioned a shortage of dartboards so without delay Stan and John changed to making dartboards, setting up a workshop in the coach house of the Red Lion.

As business improved they moved to larger premises at Bert Hancox’s garage near Churchill Road. Stan later married Ted Gomm’s niece and they (and the business) moved to Cranham Street, Jericho where dartboards continued to be made in Stan’s garden shed. However, according to Reg Richardson and other ‘Memory Lane’ readers, the address was actually 11 Jericho Street.

Desmond Greenwood, now a Deddington resident, lived in Jericho Street with his parents from 1939 and recalls Mr. and Mrs. Allen moving in next door in the late 1940s/early 1950s. Desmond said, “We could plainly hear Mr. Allen tapping away, presumably assembling his boards” adding “I don’t recall any other noise, such as a band-saw or other woodworking machinery, so I think he bought the dartboards ready cut to size.” Indeed he did. John Allen confirmed that, “We collected our boards from a timber merchant in Wheatley.”

It was at Jericho Street that Stan Allen took on a young man named Malcolm Worthington, aged 15, and taught him the skills needed. (I am indebted to Malcolm’s, sister Mrs. Kathleen Murdoch, for providing me with the two photographs included here which show Malcolm at work in Stan’s workshop circa 1953-1956. The reverse of one of the photos bears the legend ‘Malcolm Worthington, Walton Street workshop. Making dartboards 1953/56’. (Images ©Kathleen Murdoch)



Unfortunately my research is yet to uncover a photograph of Stan.

*Oxford Mail* reader Brian Sessions worked for Stan for two weeks in the early 1950s during his school holidays. He told me that Stan was certainly using inlaid wiring at that time. Brian was also able to provide details of the process. He wrote,

“Every so often he would receive a consignment of elm boards cut to the right size. To make the grooves for the wires he had a home-made tool that consisted of a length of steel tubing with a large thin nail through it at one end and two pairs of shorter nails at the appropriate distances. At the other end was a handle. To find the centre he had a cardboard template with a brass eyelet in the middle. A small hole was then punched in the board, and the long nail was inserted in this hole and the device rotated to make the grooves.”

Brian also told me that Stan’s boards were used extensively in the Oxford area. Ron Slater was landlord of the Nags Head in Thame from 1954 to 1964 and he clearly recalls Stan. Ron told me, “I bought all my dartboards from him. In those days probably 90%-95% of dartboards were manufactured from wood and Mr. Allen was a past master in this art. He was very proud to tell everyone that he was the first man to inlay the wiring and his dartboards were the finest you could buy.” Ron also recalled that Stan was a sociable man who loved to meet his customers.

Mrs. Lorine Jones contacted me to say that her family were tenants of pubs from 1936 until 1987 and well remembers going to Stan Allen’s house in Jericho to buy dartboards

during the 1950s and right up until the time he closed down the business. Lorine recalled, “He had a workshop at the back of the house and you went through the living room to get to it.”

As the popularity of the game of darts continued to increase in the 1970s, Stan’s elm board (the dartboard of choice) became threatened by the ‘bristle dartboard’. Elm boards needed to be soaked overnight to maintain their playability and so publicans usually had two available; one being played on and the other in the soak. The ‘bristle’ dartboard did not need soaking but Ron Slater, and others in the trade, preferred the elm board because ‘darts would fly back out of the early fibre boards.’ But it was not the bristle dartboard that sounded the death knell in the area for the elm board.

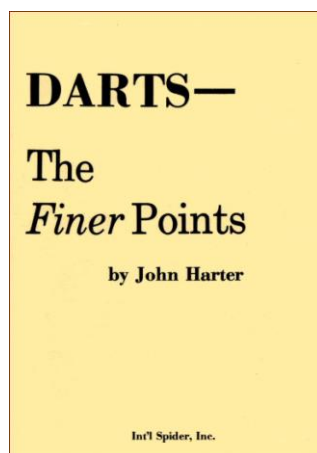
John Allen told me, “With the arrival of Dutch Elm disease [*which destroyed fifty per cent of elms in England by 1973*], our supplies came to an end.” Ever-resourceful to the end, Stan changed to making Aunt Sally Sticks and Aunt Sally Dolls and gently slipped into retirement.

As he told *Darts World* in late 1971, “I’d rather wear out than rust away.”

(My thanks to John Chipperfield, editor of the ‘Memory Lane’ feature of the *Oxford Mail* and to his readers for their help in researching this article.)

### **EVERYTHING COMES TO HE WHO WAITS – NO. 3**

Some readers may recall that back in issue #11 (February 2011) I celebrated the fact that a darts booklet that I had been searching the globe for for years had at last been found. A copy of Sam Hill’s booklet *English Darts Explained Specially for Americans and Englishmen* was generously donated to my archive by Linda Brown from Milpitas, California. The arrival of that booklet left only two book remaining on my ‘wants’ list.



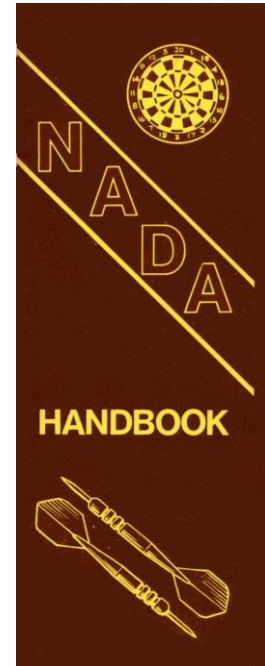
However, during July I heard from Jerry Lucky from Canada. Jerry and I had corresponded a few years ago at which time we exchanged darts books and magazines and it was good to hear from him again. Jerry had seen my appeal for *Finer Points* by John Harter, a booklet published International Spider Inc. of Livonia, Missouri in 1981. Jerry wrote to tell me that he had found a copy and that he was going to send it to me. We agreed an exchange and within days I received a package from Jerry.

But there was more...

In addition to the Harter work, Jerry had sent me an undated *NADA* [North American Darts Association] *Handbook* written by Brian Webster (Vice-President of the NADA) with Cynthia Evans together with another NADA publication (again undated) entitled *NADA – How to Set up a League - Handbook*, written by Joseph M. McElligott. I am keen to ascertain the date of publication of both of these handbooks. My best guess is in the mid-1980s but I could be wrong. Can any of my USA subscribers help with this?

My sincere thanks to Jerry for sending those booklets to me. (Jerry: I hope the copy of *Scoring for Show, Doubles for Dough* signed by both Bobby and I arrived safely and that you enjoy it.)

What's left on my wants list? It's a book/booklet written by Bob Leeming called *International Darts* which was apparently published in 1993. I have only ever seen one brief reference to this work but believe Bob might have been Canadian. Any help anyone can be in finding this work would be appreciated.



#### AND FINALLY...

Kent B has sent me this hilarious piece of darts memorabilia. He has named it 'Cereal-Bristow' as he believes that this was given away in packs of cornflakes back in the 1980s. Kent reflected:



“It’s funny to see how many kinds of merchandise Eric [Bristow] has been involved in. It awakes my collector’s instinct and I suddenly remembered an ad I saw in the Underground in London when I went to the Rainbow suite in 1988 for the World Masters. It was a series of funny paper-foldings (origami?) made from the brown wrapping paper that ‘After Eight’ mints came in. Every style of folding had a name underneath it with a question mark suggesting the chocolate could have been eaten by that person. A good idea. One of the wrappings was folded like an arrow and underneath it said ‘Eric Bristow?’”

What other examples are there of Eric merchandising? Do you have any examples in your collection of darts memorabilia? If so, write and tell me about them.

## COMING UP IN ISSUE 18

In the next issue I'll be telling you about how 'Dr. Darts' helped solve a darts problem for the boys in Afghanistan. In addition I'll be reflecting on the *News of the World* (the most popular Sunday newspaper here in the UK) and its role in the development of modern darts following the recent demise of that newspaper.

### PLUS...

Wazza Ackary from Oz will be asking *DDN* readers to help him in his quest for particular Unicorn products **PLUS** much more other stuff that you will find nowhere else.

'Til Issue 18...

Best wishes to you all,

*Patrick*

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