Introduction

> Tonight is Darts Night. All over the country hundreds of thousands of
> players – 300,000 is the approximate figure – will toe the line and hurl their
> darts in a wonderful variety of expert styles.[1]

In February 1937 the *Daily Herald* revealed that there were more than 3,000
darts clubs and over 100 darts leagues in Britain and that the game was played
by rich and poor alike, from diplomats and financiers to drivers of brewers'
drays.[2] In June 1937 the *Radio Times* reported that when the National Darts
Association (NDA) was formed in 1924 there were only eight leagues in exist-
ence but that now there were nearly 200 leagues affiliated to the NDA alone,
with more than a quarter of a million players registered with the Association.
Those playing darts 'unofficially' were estimated to 'run into millions'.[3]

This level of enthusiasm for darts, particularly among the working class, was
reflected in the response to the 1938/39 *News of the World* Individual Darts
Championship, where between 250,000 and 257,000 darts enthusiasts from
pubs and clubs across England and Wales competed for places in the finals of
the newspaper's six regional darts competitions.[4] In 1939 over 16,000 specta-
tors witnessed the London and South of England Regional Final of the *News
of the World* competition at the Royal Agricultural Hall, London, between
Jim Pike (playing out of the Windmill Club in Southwark) and Marmaduke
Breckon (representing the Jolly Sailor, Hanworth, Middlesex).[5]

But the attraction of darts was not experienced only by the working class,
where it was situated in the masculine environment of the public bar, bar
parlour or vault of the English public house. By the late 1930s the game had,
according to one contemporary, 'invaded Mayfair' and neither village inn nor
modern roadhouse, 'nor sports pavilion, nor … the most exclusive of clubs and
ships at sea was complete without a dartboard'.[6] Elite interest in darts was a
recent development. A. P. Herbert, MP, journalist and supporter of pub games

(especially skittles), wrote of 'Dart-boards … hanging on walls in Belgravia,' with 'the sons of dukes … not ashamed to throw a pretty dart at the pub.' Popularity among the upper classes received a boost when King George VI and Queen Elizabeth played a game of darts at a community centre in Slough in December 1937.[7] Darts was 'the pastime of Kings, Cabinet Ministers, novelists, stage, screen and sports stars' and, according to one (admittedly biased) source, had become 'the most popular game in Great Britain'.[8] Despite such exaggeration, darts had become one of the most popular pastimes in England and it did appear that by the late 1930s the country was enjoying a darts 'craze'. Yet at the turn of the twentieth century the subculture of darts barely existed.

This book is a study of darts as a leisure form, of its rise in popularity as part of the expansion of mass leisure in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and of its relationship to English society. It is the first academic study of darts (or any other pub game) and to a large extent the first detailed study of any kind devoted to the game. Its purpose is not only to recover and chronicle the emergence of darts in the early twentieth century but also to explore its significance as a key element of the popular culture of the period. Whilst, at first, darts may appear a trivial subject, this work argues for its importance in the history of leisure and hence aims to contribute to the social history of twentieth-century Britain. However, the focus of the book is on England rather than Britain as a whole. This is because, during the greater part of the inter-war period, darts was essentially an English public house game and was rarely found in Wales or Scotland. Modern, organised darts had its roots in London and the south-east and it was not until its popularity spread during the mid-1930s that Wales and Scotland began to engage with the game.

It should be said that darts was also an international phenomenon. Various forms of darts were being played in other countries, including France, Belgium, Australia and the United States in the early twentieth century. However, these were often not quite the same as English darts, as they were versions of existing folk games which involved throwing projectiles or employed darts as a toy (relegating it to the level of a children's game). However, as we shall see, the French target game of *flechettes* would have a major influence on the early development of the modern game of darts in England.

The main, but not exclusive, emphasis of the book is on organised and semi-organised forms of darts rather than casual darts played in the home, the youth club or other sites of recreation.

Research issues

The purpose of this book is to identify and assess the forces which governed the development of darts and transformed it from a casual pub game at the turn of the twentieth century into a popular, codified and, to some extent, cross-class recreation by the mid-1930s.

There is no escaping the fact that darts was primarily a working-class pursuit in the inter-war years (despite the elite interest that will be further discussed in Chapter 7) and any exploration of darts requires considerable discussion of the most important site of working-class leisure, the pub. Although throughout the period 1918 to 1939 the English public house remained the centre of working-class life, the expansion, development and improvement of existing leisure forms and the introduction of new ones, such as the cinema, dance halls and gate-money sports, presented the working class with a greater number of options on which to spend their disposable income and increased leisure time. Darts needs to be viewed in the context of this expansion and commercialisation of mass leisure during the inter-war period.

This book will argue that one reason for the development of darts was the concern of the drink interest (in the form of brewers and publicans) about the widening range of leisure choices available to working-class people. Darts therefore needs to be seen in the context of attempts to improve the pub in the inter-war period as a way of competing with other attractions. The improved range of leisure choices led to a necessary change in the form and nature of the English public house and particularly in the strategy of the brewers as the drink interest attempted to defend its businesses from the economic impact of alternative social diversions. At the same time the drink interest was not just having to deal with commercial pressures. Brewers and licensees continued to deal with threats from temperance organisations, allegedly biased licensing benches and the forces of law and order. Darts offered an opportunity to make the pub appear more respectable.

A key element of brewers' inter-war strategy was societal and structural change through the reconstruction of a large number of existing pubs and the construction of new, cleaner, brighter licensed premises, a scheme generally known as the improved public house movement. The improvement movement shifted the focus from the mere business of drinking alcohol to the provision of food and refreshment, including non-alcoholic beverages, and indoor recreations (all in an improved environment). Darts as an organised pastime was introduced originally by brewers in London as part of their armoury against

these combined threats, and the strategy was later adopted by brewers in other parts of the country. This work therefore raises issues about the patronage of leisure forms in the twentieth century. There is nothing new about the drink interest as a patron of leisure. What we see in the twentieth century is a continuation of its earlier social role.

One form of patronage that helped develop darts was the sponsorship of a number of popular newspapers. The continuing growth of the media, especially popular newspapers, eventually led to the involvement of the *News of the World*, a newspaper that by the 1920s had built up a huge readership among the working class. Out of an agreement wrought by enthusiasts within the NDA and representatives of the *News of the World* the Sunday newspaper introduced a London-based individual darts test which by the end of the 1930s had gained sufficient momentum that it was able to embrace most regions of England and Wales. This was a competition which gave the working-class man (and woman) the opportunity to be a national, or, more strictly speaking, a regional, champion. We need to explore how the media in the form of the *News of the World*, national newspapers, radio and television aided the growth of darts.

Without the direct involvement of the popular press it is unlikely that darts would have attained such a high profile as it achieved during the mid-to-late 1930s. Thus it is necessary to examine how darts was reported. The game's greatest support came from the Sunday rather than daily newspapers (the *News of the World*, the *People* and the *Sunday Pictorial*). Many working-class people could afford to buy only one newspaper a week, and Sunday provided the leisure time to read it. Therefore the social influence of these newspapers will be examined. Of other media, towards the end of the 1930s, darts was featured on both the wireless and television (which enjoyed only limited exist-ence before the Second World War). However, as will be demonstrated, darts was not simply the product of pressure from elite interests.

The success of darts was made by forces as much from below as from above. The original demand in the early 1920s for standardisation of the rules of darts did not come from above (the brewers) but from enthusiasts at local, pub level, the licensees and participants who were faced with different rules and different dartboards and sought clarity from their trade representatives. This research therefore resists some of the conventional approaches in the history of leisure which have focused on issues around social control or the commercialisation of leisure leading to middle-class hegemony. The evidence of darts reveals a more complex social interaction in popular culture.

Darts and 'popular culture'

'Popular culture' is a complex term and presents some difficulties of interpretation. It means the culture of the people, but the term 'the people' is vague and thus the definition of popular culture is notoriously difficult.[9] It includes working-class culture but also cultural forms that are practised and enjoyed rather more widely. Debate comes over the question of who makes popular culture. Does it emerge from below or is it shaped from above? The Communications Studies scholar John Fiske suggests that popular culture is 'made by the people' and is 'the active process of generating and circulating meanings and pleasures within a social system'. Fiske further argues that popular culture is 'the culture of the subordinated and disempowered and thus always bears with it signs of power relations, traces of the forces of domination and subordination that are central to our social system and therefore our social experience'.[10] The Frankfurt school of the inter-war years (in the form of Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse) had argued that the function of the culture industry was ultimately to organise leisure time in the same way as industrialisation had organised work time: creating popular (or mass) culture by imposition.[11]

At first the wider introduction of darts and of organised darts in particular may suggest that darts fits into the arguments about social control so prominent in the historiography of nineteenth-century leisure (see below).[12] However, whilst the brewers and licensees intentionally introduced darts as part of a strategy to prevent their existing customers from adopting other leisure pursuits, and to attract new customers to their improved public houses, the participants always had a choice. They did not enter leagues under pressure or duress and were able to play on a casual basis. There were plenty of other versions of the darts game that could be played to local rules and without central regulation or interference. Darts might be seen as a form of 'soft' social control (as it was a relatively tame and respectable game) but it was not a mechanism for controlling the working class. Despite moments of social conflict during the inter-war period, this book focuses on one of the small pleasures that nevertheless made a difference in helping people deal with the anxieties of life during the Depression.[13]

Thus these broadly Marxist approaches that have been used to explain popular culture are limited in their usefulness for understanding the emergence of darts. This book argues that darts emerged not from the elite (as a form of appropriate recreation) but by negotiation between the subordinate and dominant groups, a process often involving both resistance and incorporation.

The process of negotiation in relation to darts was begun not by the capitalist brewers but from 'below' (in the form of publicans and players). This original research therefore describes a complex form of cultural interaction.

In order to understand fully the development of any form of mass leisure we need to examine its material base, that is, to establish a business and economic history of the game by looking at the people who manufactured darts, dartboards and ancillary items. As we shall see, there was no darts industry, as such, before 1920, but as the popularity of the game grew, particularly in the London area, small businesses were established by entrepreneurs to meet the increasing demand from pubs, brewers and individuals seeking the equipment for darts play. To understand the development of that industry in the 1920s and 1930s we will examine the original supply of darts equipment and the material forces that led to the creation of an identifiable darts industry. An element often omitted from research into other sports, this book will explain the origins and development of the early darts and dartboard industry and identify links between the entrepreneurs, the brewers, the National Darts Association and the media. It will also show that the French played an important role in the early days in the provision of darts equipment.

But what kind of activity is darts? It can be viewed as sport, recreation or a form of adult play. By close examination of darts a variety of social processes can be observed. First and foremost, darts will be shown to be about the nature and associational culture of the English public house. It is therefore necessary to examine the spatial nature of the pub – the pub as a social centre, a constituent part of British drinking culture – and view pubs as gendered spaces with internal divisions and different clienteles. Current research tends towards the view that the pub was very much a 'masculine republic' and that the 'patriarchy' of the pub was all-embracing, discouraging women from entering the pub and thus having less opportunity to engage in pub games.[14] This book examines the gendered nature of the public house and reveals that, within the apparent male exclusivity of areas of those establishments, women were to some extent afforded the opportunity to play, and by the end of the 1930s a number of women's darts leagues existed.

But nothing ever happens openly within the public house without the active participation or approval of the man or woman in direct control of the premises: the landlord or landlady. Surprisingly, little academic research has been undertaken into the role of the publican, which was changing both out of changes wrought by the brewers and through their own initiative. The importance of the publican in encouraging, developing and nurturing darts

during the inter-war period cannot be overstated, and this work presents an opportunity to study some aspects of the role of the publican in everyday life.

Darts as a pub game

The specific context in which darts emerged was that of the pub game. Therefore it is important to consider the functions and status of games played inside public houses in order to clarify how and why darts became the most popular and enduring example of this leisure form. The English public house has always been a social centre, the primary purpose of the landlord/publican/manager being not only to sell victuals but also to ensure that his or her hostelry is a place of relaxation and entertainment. Before the Restoration many games were considered as idle pastimes and banned but subsequently the focus shifted to concentrate on drinking and pub games and other entertainments which were allowed to develop relatively unhindered and thus games became an established part of English pub culture.[15] Indeed, music hall developed out of pub-based entertainment in the nineteenth century.

Pub games were routinely casual yet have contributed to the development of what today are major sports, such as football, cricket and boxing. To some extent childish in nature, these games were suited to the customer base, being easy to learn and requiring minimal outlay for participation. Pub games tended to be unregulated or, if regulated, capable of deregulation, being played for amusement and/or small stakes. This is therefore a study of the English at play.

The games played in public houses generate various forms of pleasure, depending on the game that is being played. For example, darts and quoits, which require considerable space, generate both group (teams playing each other), paired (one darts player playing another), individual (one darts player playing alone) and associational pleasures (friends and supporters watching the game) whilst also offering the opportunity of sociability, of making new friends through wider involvement (the process of the 'open board', taking chalks and scoring a game in order to play in the next), there being no requirement for an individual to be part of the group before joining in.

Darts has endured more than other pub games extant at the beginning of the twentieth century because it is the most sociable and the most adaptable of all. Any opposition from indoor quoits, which was the only real challenger to darts inside the public house in terms of sociability, failed to materialise. Darts was promoted by the NDA as an organised game and was attractive to all

ages, easy to promote, easy to learn and cheap, as, in most pubs, the equipment was provided free of charge. The game also had the most potential in terms of commercialisation, with its variety of styles of darts and dartboards which could be played anywhere by anyone. In addition, darts was more outwardly competitive than other indoor pub games and was individual, one-against-one or team-oriented (any number) and could be played by anyone regardless of sex, age, colour or creed, be they able-bodied or disabled. Darts, to that extent, has been non-discriminatory.

Surprisingly, there are a number of intellectual aspects of indoor pub games which do not apply to outdoor games previously associated with the public house, such as football and boxing; for example, mental arithmetic. Indeed, there is a sort of irony in the knowledge that a working-class pubgoer could improve his or her education or intellectual capacity whilst playing pub games and, at the same time, imbibing. For example, in order to play cribbage, a player must have knowledge of division in order to calculate the number of points or potential points he or she may be able to score. Darts demands skill (co-ordination of hand and eye to hit the target), concentration (to focus on the game and the board whilst mentally excluding any background sounds or interruptions), mental arithmetic, including subtraction (when chalking to play, or deducting one's own score whilst playing), addition (when adding up each score whilst chalking or adding up one's own score whilst playing), multi-plication (knowing the values of doubles and trebles of numbers as defined by the double and treble rings on a standard dartboard) and a detailed knowledge of how to end the game on the required double (known colloquially as the 'finish') as quickly as possible and in any event quicker than one's opponent.

Thus an extensive number of mental skills are required but it is impossible to say to what extent darts and other more minor public house pastimes helped improve the educational standards of participants. Certainly to be confident in playing darts each player must have basic mathematical ability. If participants want to 'take chalks' in order to participate in a game they will be helped by other players and they will gradually learn to score for themselves and pass that knowledge on to others, not only on the dartboard but also elsewhere, for example the home. Darts therefore possessed the intellectual characteristics that, Ross McKibbin has shown, were part of working-class pursuits such as gambling and following the turf.[16]

Playing darts to a high standard also brings a sense of achievement, and winning, as in other sports, boosts self-confidence, which may then be trans-ferred to other aspects of a player's life either at work or at home or in other

forms of relationship. The camaraderie of darts leads, literally in some cases, to team building, a regular, focused activity where darts can be played at a serious or casual level, depending on whether it is a match night or just a meeting of friends. Pub games aid the cohesiveness of the public house as a social centre, especially for the working class; when a player made it to the finals of the *News of the World* Individual Darts Championship, he – and on all but one occasion during the inter-war years it was 'he' – would become an, albeit temporary, celebrity and bring attention and kudos to his local community.

But the major difficulty inherent in the study of pub games in general and darts in particular is that so little has been written about such 'small-scale' pleasures – those important elements of English popular culture, those everyday activities 'hobbies and spare-time occupations' that George Orwell identified in 1941 as being the very essence of Englishness and representative of the '*privateness* of English life'. 'We are,' Orwell argued, 'a nation of stamp-collectors, pigeon-fanciers, amateur carpenters, coupon-snippers, darts-players, crossword-puzzle fans.'[17] Yet to date such important and universal activities have tended to be overlooked by scholars.[18] Furthermore, as Arthur R. Taylor observed in 1992, 'taproom … conventions have never been properly chronicled' and therein lies the primary difficulty for anyone setting out to study the place of darts in English social history.[19]

Whilst it is uncommon for books in this series to include a section on the historiography of leisure, such a section is included here, as this work represents the first academic study of the social history of darts and it is therefore crucial to set the subject clearly in the context of leisure. Readers who do not wish to concern themselves with the historiographical and methodological issues that underpin this unique study may wish to omit the next three sections and move on to Chapter 2.

The historiography of leisure

In 1979 Alun Howkins and John Lowerson prepared a brief 'state of the art' review of the patterns of leisure in Britain between 1919 and 1939 on behalf of the Sports Council and the Social Science Research Council.[20] They discovered that relatively little serious work had been undertaken on leisure in the inter-war period, that existing work was 'quite sparse' and that 'the historian of the inter-war period must still rely largely on the intuitive and brilliant, but alas unreferenced, *The Long Weekend* (1940), which gives so many leads'.[21] Howkins and Lowerson declared that the study of leisure and recreation was only then

beginning to appear as part of the discipline of history and, although most of the research had been concentrated on changes during and immediately after the industrial revolution, 'the possibilities for research on more recent patterns are considerable, indeed imperative'.[22]

There are some contemporary works that can be drawn upon. They include the work of sociologists such as C. Delisle Burns, who attempted to analyse 'certain new tendencies in the actual uses of leisure in what is called the modern world',[23] and Henry Durant, who sought to solve the dilemma 'Why should the opportunity for the vast majority of people to have time to spend, time to enjoy, time to develop their own private interests, be regarded as a problem, one almost said a danger?'[24] Approaching leisure from an anthropologist's perspective, and based on his exploration of some of 'the most primitive and uncivilised parts of the world', Tom Harrisson, in collaboration with the poet Charles Madge, established, organised and led Mass Observation in a detailed study of drinking, focusing primarily on the habits of pubgoers in Bolton between 1937 and 1939.[25] This was part of their general attempt, as anthropologists, to evaluate the nature of everyday life. Historical works relating to specific aspects of leisure were few and far between, although John A. R. Pimlott's seminal study of the seaside, *The Englishman's Holiday*, was a notable exception.[26] However, at the time of publication the implications of these works were not taken seriously. The reason was primarily the fact that the discipline of social history was only gradually at that time coming into being.

In 1957 Richard Hoggart produced a ground-breaking study of working-class culture.[27] Based to a large extent on his own personal experience, *The Uses of Literacy* was a critical appraisal of the changes wrought by publications and entertainments – the major commercial forces of mass culture – upon the working class, including popular songs, novels and magazines.[28] Whilst denouncing the imposition of mass culture, and lamenting the loss of an authentic popular culture, Hoggart also warned readers 'to be cautious of the interpretations given by historians of the working-class movement', stating, 'I do sometimes bring away [from reading such books] an impression that their authors overrate the place of political activity in working-class life, that they do not always have an adequate sense of the grass roots of that life.'[29] The paucity of sources concerning leisure was clearly revealed in his bibliography. However, more significantly, Hoggart's work opened up the cultural landscape – *The Guardian* recently referred to *The Uses of Literacy* as having a 'seismic impact'[30] – and inspired a new breed of intellectuals to study more closely the recreational and leisure pursuits of the working class. Working-class people,

it was understood, should not be patronised, and their lives had to be taken seriously. This was evident not only in the new discipline of labour history but also in the modern discipline of Cultural Studies, which Hoggart inspired and which pointed to ways in which it was possible to think seriously about mass leisure. This book, dealing as it does with the apparently apolitical aspects of popular life, attempts to build on Hoggart's approach.

The expanding historiography of leisure during the 1960s and 1970s was mainly devoted to the nineteenth century. The most inspirational historical text of the 1960s was E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*.[31] In this extensive study of the reconstruction and experience of the working class Thompson brought together studies of popular culture, political struggle, religious movements, trade union organisation and community building during the industrial revolution which established 'history from below'.[32] Thereafter, scholars became concerned with working-class leisure. This new area of research made a significant contribution to the developing field of social history.[33] A number of themes were employed with reference to the nineteenth century which have structured the ways leisure historians have dealt with the twentieth. These include the role of class, the commercialisation and standardisation of leisure in the form of mass culture, the construction of an allegedly 'traditional' working-class culture, social control, the promotion of rational recreation, the sporting revolution and the role of alcohol as a fault line in everyday life.

A major theme was that the rowdy and rough world of eighteenth-century popular culture was heavily controlled and contained by the rise of the Victorian middle class and ideas about respectability. The key text here was Robert Malcolmson's work on English popular recreations from 1700 to 1850.[34] Malcolmson described the decline that pre-industrial recreations underwent during the industrial revolution. For him 'the foundations of many traditional practices were relentlessly swept away, leaving a vacuum which would be only gradually reoccupied, and then of necessity by novel or radically revamped forms of diversion', such as football.[35] This notion of a leisure vacuum has proved controversial. Recent historians have pointed out that there is as much to be said for continuity as for change. Many erstwhile traditional activities survived longer than Malcolmson had suggested. There were sports which had previously depended on the patronage of the rich but which, when patronage was withdrawn, 'learned to survive or even grow'.[36] Most important, new, commercial leisure pursuits were being created, invented and introduced, more suited to a newly emergent capitalist society.[37] Adrian Harvey has argued that

a sophisticated sporting culture catering for a mass commercial audience can be discerned in the late eighteenth century.[38] This fundamentally challenged Malcolmson's portrait of an essentially non-commercial world of recreation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

One form of continuity is the role of the public house, although the pub lost its former economic functions and became essentially a place of relaxation during the nineteenth century.[39] Peter Clark argued that the public house did not undergo a dramatic transformation as a consequence of the industrial revolution but would continue to be 'stretched and pulled in new directions by a combination of economic, political and other pressures', including increased commercialisation and specialisation of the public house, and tighter magisterial controls, a trend which would continue into the twentieth century.[40] However, a new force entered British society in the form of the Victorian temperance movement, analysed most notably by Brian Harrison.[41] Harrison contended that the nineteenth-century temperance debate was really an argument about how leisure time should be spent and that temperance reformers were inadvertent promoters of the idea of state intervention.

During the 1970s there was increased focus on the rise of commercialisation and standardised forms of leisure. The inter-war Frankfurt school had described this as 'mass culture', the product of 'culture industries' where culture is manufactured for the people and not by them.[42] A culture of spectatorship replaced one of participation. Historians argued there was a leisure revolution in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries based on more free time, higher wages and an improved standard of living. The function of the culture industry was to 'organize leisure time in the same way as industrialization has organised work time. Work under capitalism stunts the senses; the culture industry continues the process.'[43] Existing and developing forms of mass culture included the music halls, popular Sunday newspapers, seaside holidays and spectator sport. Darts will be seen as part of this expanding leisure world.

The historiography of leisure often assumed that leisure was a form of social control (and indeed that leisure was a way in which capitalist society was held together). Peter Bailey took issue with this stress on social control. He examined the changing nature of leisure during the period through the middle-class promotion of rational recreation and 'improving pursuits' such as the Working Men's Club movement, but found that these initiatives often had limited impact. He detected traces of the old less respectable popular culture in the new entertainment industries, especially music halls.[44]

In the 1970s it became clear that popular culture had considerable implica-

tions for the development of popular politics. Eric Hobsbawm argued that a distinct and allegedly 'traditional' working-class culture emerged in the later nineteenth century, defined by football, cinemagoing, the seaside holiday, fish and chips and the 'famous little flat peaked cap' which became 'the virtual uniform' of the British worker at leisure.[45] Gareth Stedman Jones also argued that, once Chartism had been defeated, working people 'ceased to believe that they could shape society in their own image'. With capitalism becoming an 'immovable horizon' the impetus of working-class activity lay in trade unions, co-operatives and friendly societies – all indicating 'recognition of the existing social order as the inevitable framework of action' – and a 'culture of consolation' emerged, based on the belief that capitalism could not be beaten and the best option was to pursue the small pleasures of life.[46] Stedman Jones's case study concentrated on London. Even though the late Victorian years saw the beginnings of an organised labour movement, the belief in class-based politics was combined with a spirit of fatalism and conformity. The result was a defensive labour movement. Popular culture was therefore a key to the way in which society was shaped.

The 1980s, 1990s and the new millennium witnessed more extensive work on the twentieth century, some building on familiar themes established in earlier work on the nineteenth century such as the growth of commercialised leisure and social control. Stephen Jones's seminal work on inter-war leisure rejected 'crude notions of social control whereby leisure is viewed as imposed on the working class by their so-called social "betters"'. He also argued that working-class leisure was, and is, 'a political thing', the question of leisure often being raised in Parliament and, 'in the informal arena of the local community, people struggled over the meanings of rights to particular leisure forms' whilst working-class leaders campaigned for improved standards of leisure such as sports facilities and public funding of recreation.[47] However, darts rarely became a political issue in any real sense.

Commercial entertainments have bulked large in twentieth-century leisure historiography. For example, Jeffrey Richards examined the role of cinema-going in everyday lives in the inter-war period.[48] John K. Walton continued his in-depth examination of English seaside holidays, explored the role of fish and chips and, with Gary S. Cross, provided a detailed account of the transformation of popular spectacle and pleasure through 'people's playgrounds' – beach and pleasure resorts – both in Britain and in the United States.[49] New research into mass leisure also focused on the development of mass communications. Asa Briggs's earlier extensive research into the medium of broadcasting was

broadened by such scholars as Dan LeMahieu, whilst the role and develop-
ment of the twentieth-century popular press were analysed by Martin Conboy
who interpreted the medium in a 'radical new form of consumer-spectator
society'.[50]

James J. Nott argued that popular music was 'a powerful and persistent
influence in the daily life of millions' in inter-war Britain.[51] Nott points to one
of the great themes of the twentieth-century leisure: Americanisation (evident
in the music played in dance halls). As we shall see, darts was rather different:
it was constructed as an element of traditional Englishness that contrasted
with the attractions of American music and dance such as jazz and swing. The
English public house, where darts was introduced, remained generally free of
American influence.[52]

From the 1980s more work was undertaken on the way class shaped
leisure, even though this was also the period when historians began to focus
less on social class and consider other identities such as gender and race.[53]
Ross McKibbin has enabled scholars to make sense of the patterns of leisure
common among British workers.

His essay 'Why was there no Marxism in Britain?' explained the evolution of
working-class politics during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries
and argued that one of the reasons why the proletariat had not risen in revolu-
tion against the capitalist hegemony was the largely non-political character of
workers' associational life. This complemented the approach by Hobsbawm and
Stedman Jones (discussed above). McKibbin's work on gambling revealed that,
rather than being a prescriptive activity responsible for plunging thousands of
working-class families into abject poverty, betting was far from corrupt; instead
it provided an opportunity 'for both intellectual activity and the acquisition of
intellectual status to a class which was excluded by others and excluded itself
from an officially defined national culture'. This intellectual status was also
attainable by the working-class male through playing darts. McKibbin extended
his research into the area of working-class hobbies and demonstrated that, far
from being a distraction from the primary process of work, hobbies were a direct
response to the reduction of stress and tension experienced in the workplace
as new technologies made work less arduous, less competitive and less physi-
cally demanding and provided a release from pent-up tension and satisfied the
on-going desire to compete whilst also representing distinct forms of intellectual
working-class activity.[54] Again, darts needs to be viewed in this context.

In his major work on classes and cultures McKibbin's discussion emphasises
the undemocratic, hierarchical nature of popular sports during the inter-war

years, the government and spirit of most British sports being 'almost wholly at variance with anything approaching democracy'. Sport, with its notions of fair play and being a 'good sport', entered into politics introducing 'a discourse of restraint'. McKibbin argued that the ideological power of that discourse was to some extent responsible for the comparative absence of political extremism in inter-war England.[55] McKibbin's research never dwelt to any great extent on the role of the public house in terms of recreational benefits to its working-class customer base but, as we shall see, the apolitical, democratised game of darts was as much to do with inter-war male working-class leisure patterns as with betting or any hobby. McKibbin's work, by demonstrating the complexities of cultural forms, of focusing on small-scale rather than large, commercialised leisure forms, supplies a context for this book.

Another important approach that has influenced this research is that of Andrew Davies, who showed how poverty shaped working-class leisure in the early twentieth century.[56] Davies argued that historians' focus on mass culture was slightly misleading, as many of the working class could not afford to enjoy it. Poverty and unemployment restricted many working-class people to the pub and the immediate neighbourhood (home, street corner, etc.). He also demonstrated that gender was central to the division of leisure in working-class districts. This focus on the character of small-scale leisure is important for understanding the development of darts.

Claire Langhamer also shows that leisure was shaped by gender and investigates from a feminist perspective how women lived in different leisure worlds from men between 1920 and 1960. She provides an overview of leisure in the context of women's everyday lives and highlights the relative neglect of women in the history of leisure. The sections of her work relating to women and pubs have helped inform this research.[57] Much of her research relating to women's leisure was undertaken in direct response to Peter Bailey's earlier article calling for an understanding of the 'informal, day to day, private content' of leisure, which, Bailey argued, was absent from leisure history.[58]

Another important development in leisure studies during the 1980s was a serious study of sport, which followed similar patterns to that of leisure history. Indeed, until the 1980s academic research into sport – any sport – was generally neglected or even ridiculed. Richard Holt has argued that early historical research into sport 'tended to come via personal inclination and enthusiasm' and, initially at least, was 'perceived as marginal or even eccentric' in the more conventional academic circles.[59] This corresponds with James Walvin's view that the subject's most formidable task was 'to overcome that deep and abiding

intellectual suspicion which is so commonly manifested towards the very concept of sports history and sports sociology'.[60] There subsequently emerged a body of scholars who would become leaders in the field of sports history and set the standard for others to follow.

For example, Tony Mason's *Association Football and English Society 1863–1915*, published in 1980, is a seminal work which set a standard of excellence in the social history of sport which remains unchallenged in its field to this day, the book having achieved the status of the standard academic work for anyone interested in the history of football. Richard Holt argues that everything done subsequently in relation to the history of sport 'benefited from the breach he [Mason] made in the walls of the academy'.[61] Mason's work on football has inspired many excellent works on sports history by authors including Dennis Brailsford (boxing), Tony Collins (rugby), Eric Halladay (rowing), Mike Huggins (flat racing and sport in Victorian society), Dave Russell (football), Keith Sandiford (cricket) and Jack Williams (cricket).[62] Mason's work provided inspiration for this book by examining the ways in which leisure pastimes can be employed to understand social structure and everyday life. On a methodological level, he also dealt with the problem of incomplete sources, where clubs left no trace of their existence or 'left little behind them for the historian save a few match results and the names of a handful of players in an old newspaper', many having not even left 'that modest spoor'.[63] A straightforward and practical historian, Mason selected and shaped his material from disparate sources in terms of respectability, urbanisation and class, all dominant issues of Victorian social history, and this demonstrated that sports history was an important way of understanding how modern societies work.[64]

One of the other themes to emerge in the 1990s relating to late nineteenth and early twentieth-century sport was the notion of the 'revolution' in sport characterised by clearly recognisable changes in the scale and nature of Britain's sporting culture. This 'revolution' was signified by a dramatic increase in the range of sports available and by the modernisation of sport through commercialisation, the provision of new or improved spaces for leisure (e.g. stadiums), by codification of often conflicting sets of rules and the growing professional nature of sport, all of which had parallels within the developing game of darts during the inter-war years.[65]

Where darts exactly fits into the study of sports history presents a dilemma. Is darts a sport, a recreation or possibly even a hobby? The difficulty is that darts contains elements of all these things. As we shall see, darts was originally a recreation and a fairground attraction, which was then codified and

promoted in a similar way to commercialised sports. It is therefore a hybrid, recognised during the inter-war years more as a recreational activity than as a formal sport. The definition of sport as 'Pleasant pastime; amusement; diversion' may best describe the general view of darts during the period.[66]

That the initial thrust of sports history research would be into the most popular sports, including football, cricket, rugby and boxing, was predictable. The smaller-scale activities, such as darts, have had to wait much longer to receive scholarly attention. Sports historians, in the main, have not dealt with darts. The exceptions are Richard Holt, who included a brief two-page résumé of darts in his seminal work *Sport and the British*, Dennis Brailsford, who makes a few references to darts and women and latterly Tony Collins's and Wray Vamplew's work on sport and alcohol.[67] Whilst these works have helped to construct the social history of darts within the context of other aspects of inter-war popular sporting culture, this book will assist in the understanding of popular culture during the period through darts.

In particular, this book follows the spirit of John Lowerson's research into the Sussex recreation of stoolball.[68] This often neglected game was analysed by Lowerson in terms of the modernisation of traditional games, codification and bureaucracy and 'concerns of class, gender and social control, "popular culture" and the annexation or invention of tradition for nationalist and imperial purposes' – all issues that we shall see can be detected in darts.[69] Lowerson's deployment of the resources of social history provided stoolball with deeper meaning by establishing its links with wider social processes.

This book seeks to build on recent developments in leisure historiography to make sense of darts as part of English society and, thereby, fully investigate some of the social forces that determine everyday life (such as the role of patronage in leisure or the different leisure worlds that men and women have sometimes lived in). Twentieth-century leisure is still an under-researched area. This book is an attempt to start filling a major gap in the literature.

Historiography of darts

Until 1989 the historiography of darts consisted, in the main, of non-academic research.[70] A detailed review of popular works on the subject reveals an astonishing lack of original research into the history of the game. In such works there are claims that 'Darts has no history' or that 'The origin of the game seems to be lost in obscurity.'[71] Most writers about darts have not been concerned with the history of the game. It was irrelevant to the main task of producing
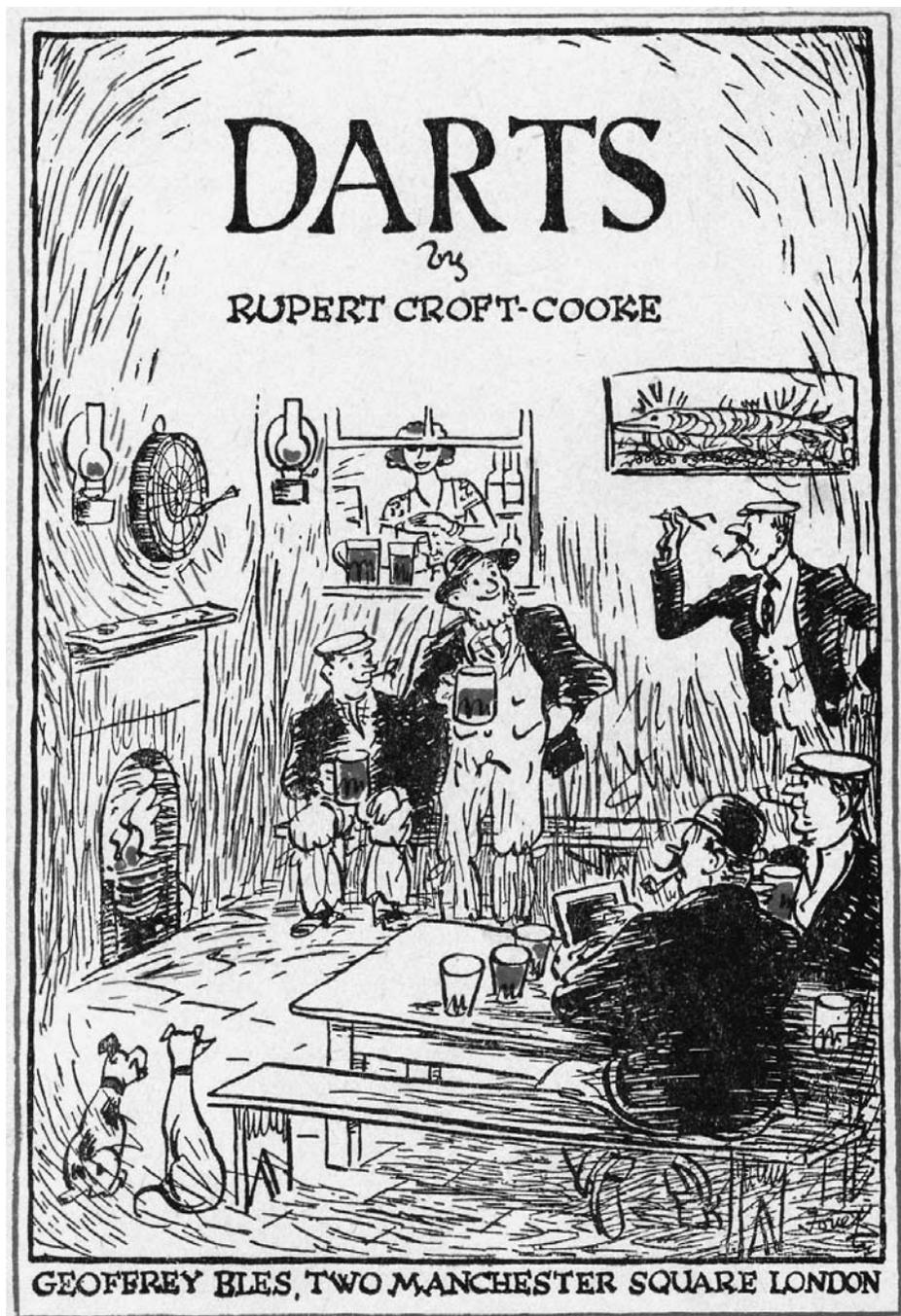
1   *Darts*, by Rupert Croft-Cooke (1936), the first book to be published focusing solely
on the game

books to tight deadlines in response to an upsurge in public interest in darts.[72]
Even in the first book dedicated to darts (Figure 1), published in 1936, author
Rupert Croft-Cooke said, 'Of its origin I can tell you nothing.'[73]

More books were published during the inter-war period about cricket than any other game.[74] During the first four decades of the twentieth century only four books on darts were produced (all during the darts craze between 1937 and 1939).[75] Subsequently, except for several rule books, a revised edition of Croft-Cooke's *Darts*, a darts annual and a darts tutorial work, no other books were published on the game until 1968.[76] Even then the author, Noel E. Williamson, apparently declining to spend much time in detailed consideration of the origins of darts, casually speculated, 'I reckon, myself, that the prehistoric cave-man must have thrown sharp pieces of stone into a tree at some time or another, and how much farther back than that can we possibly get?'[77]

Thanks to the immense popularity of darts during the late 1970s and 1980s a plethora of books appeared on the subject. Only two attempted to trace the history of the game of darts with any degree of rigour.[78] Two others provided outline histories that include some clues to darts' heritage.[79] It was not until 1992 that Arthur R. Taylor attempted to pull together a full chronological history of darts but he barely dealt with the inter-war period and neither Taylor nor anyone else has attempted to consider the game in terms of social history.[80] Thus it is difficult to recover the history of darts through examination of books on the subject, which, for the most part, are generalisations and focused on a popular readership. In some cases the books are fraught with inaccuracies and include perpetuated myths shored up by guesswork.

The present research, especially in relation to the origins of the game, has often been hindered by a number of 'facts' which have proved to be nothing of the kind.[81] Some facts, such as the court case involving William Annakin, appear to have been deliberately distorted by authors in order to make darts history more interesting for the popular reader.[82] It was therefore necessary to turn to social commentators for clues.

It is from the writings of such authors as T. H. White, Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, Rupert Croft-Cooke and Mass Observation that many of the key building blocks of the social history of darts are found.[83] Countless general books on English towns and the countryside and numerous travelogues of the period have been examined for isolated references to pub culture and pub games. Such research has provided fragmentary evidence and hints of direction, these facts making the extensive search worthwhile.[84]

Sources

Archival records of the licensed trade and brewers and the associated retail magazines and journals, including the *Morning Advertiser* and the *Brewing Review*, reveal much about the pressures that the English public house was under during the first four decades of the twentieth century and the increasing need to provide recreation and food as alternatives to mere drinking. These records also provide valuable evidence of the growth of darts leagues – often to the detriment of other established pub games – and help gauge the influence darts had on pub culture as perceived by the brewery and licensed trade as participation levels increased.

The non-catalogued but chronological collection of toys and games catalogues, ranging from 1900 to 1940, held in the archive of the Museum of Childhood, Bethnal Green, provided crucial data. Those data enabled an assessment to be made of the importance of the toy business in the formative years of the importation of darts and the emergence of the darts industry. In addition, the annual reports of the London Fever Hospital (1938–1940) held by the archive at the Royal Free Hospital (Hampstead) enabled an assessment to be made of the importance of a darts-related charity.

However, the research for this book has been highly dependent on oral testimony, unpublished manuscripts and newspaper reports. It has always been borne in mind that such sources contain pitfalls, including selective memory, prejudice or biased reporting. Although the use of interviews by professional historians is 'long-standing and perfectly compatible with scholarly standards', doubts about the reliability of oral testimony have been raised in the past, as the quality and accuracy of the received knowledge depends upon the subjects themselves, their individual comprehension and, more important, upon their interest. [85] Thus, whilst oral history may be the 'raw material of social memory', it is, as John Tosh argues, naive to suppose that such testimony represents a 'pure distillation of past experience'.[86] Indeed, Eric Hobsbawm himself commented in his autobiography that a certain memory had been 'corrupted by sixty-odd years of mental redrafting'.[87] All memories revealed in an interview, however precise or vivid they may appear to be, have already been 'filtered through subsequent experience' and are most likely 'overlaid with nostalgia'. Any data derived from oral history techniques cannot be taken at face value; they must be subject to critical evaluation. No source, whether oral or written, can be utilised in the process of historical reconstruction until an assessment has been made of its standing as historical

evidence.[88] Thus personal reminiscences have been critically used alongside other sources.

Some things, however, can be discovered only through oral history. Only through oral testimony was Andrew Davies, during his research into leisure and poverty in inter-war Salford and Manchester, able to obtain the fragments of data which allowed him to study drinking, gambling and sport, three of the cornerstones of traditional working-class culture. It also enabled him to note the place of darts in the lives of working-class men and women.[89] Only by this process was Davies able to show also how working-class leisure activities were structured and constrained by poverty and unemployment.

Claire Langhamer found that oral testimony proved to be 'an important means of accessing both perceptions and experiences at a local level, allowing for the examination of interpretation and motivation as well as patterns of behaviour.'[90] Through oral history methods, Elizabeth Roberts traced changes in attitudes and standards and styles of living of working-class women in central and north Lancashire relating to the period 1890 to 1940 and revealed that 'there was little feeling among the majority of women interviewed that they or their mothers had been particularly exploited by men'; the research also revealing some interesting and otherwise unobtainable insights into women and the pub.[91]

During the research for this book the application of oral history techniques through formal interviews with people who were closely involved in one or more aspects of the development of darts during the first four decades of the twentieth century has produced a significant amount of data that was simply not available from any other source. The interviewees included John Ross (former Life President of the National Darts Association of Great Britain, NDAGB), discussing the early organisation of darts, Ernest Deverell concerning the darts industry and specifically referring to his employment as a darts salesman in the 1920s, John Hill, son of the founder of Abbey Sports, revealing a child's view of the darts industry in the 1920s and Stanley Lowy, MBE, son of Frank Lowy, the founder of Unicorn Products, one of the world's foremost providers of darts and darts equipment, established in 1938.[92] Interviews with these and other individuals added significantly to the understanding of the place of darts in the social history of the English people during the inter-war period. The interviews also revealed perceptions and experiences of darts as a leisure form and as a part of the leisure industry between 1900 and 1939 by those most closely involved with the processes and brought to light patterns of behaviour that might otherwise have remained hidden. Such oral testimony also led to

crucial links with hitherto unknown newspaper reports and identified points in the history of darts that might never have otherwise have been recovered.

Works of autobiography have been utilised to reflect personal views of the period. Robert Roberts's memories of his early life in Salford demonstrate the important role of publicans in the life of the working class in his 'classic slum', although he makes no reference at all to pub games.[93] Not surprisingly, it is the few autobiographies published by publicans such as Edie Beed and John G. Showers that provide some evidence of darts-playing in public houses during the period 1900 to 1939.[94]

The genre of publican autobiographies was begun in the 1930s by John Fothergill when, in 1931, *An Innkeeper's Diary*, compiled from 'tired notes' that he had kept 'to remind us in our old age of the Spreadeagle Inn' at Thame, was published.[95] This met with critical success and was followed seven years later by *Confessions of an Innkeeper*, which related to Fothergill's period from the mid-1930s as licensee of the Three Swans, Market Harborough.[96] However, Fothergill's 'inns' were middle and upper-class hotels and thus no reference to indoor pub games of any kind can be found in his memoirs. Author Thomas Burke, who wrote extensively about English public houses, believed that '[t]o write about the English inn is almost to write about England itself, so closely is the inn woven with the daily life of men of every degree …'.[97] Burke was the first to recognise the social-historical value of landlords' memoirs, arguing in 1933 that 'It ought to be a self-imposed duty upon landlords of inns to write up week by week the happenings in their inns,' adding that if that had been undertaken in the past 'we should now have intimate and illuminating sidelights upon people and periods throughout the centuries, instead of the isolated fragments which are only unearthed by painstaking search among old documents'.[98] Until Fothergill's diaries were published, such fragments could otherwise be found in travelogues. However, whilst authors of such works were able to record personal impressions of the public house and the role of the publican, the latter's views were rarely recorded.[99] Burke recognised not only a crucial shortfall in knowledge of the role of the publican but also the value of such records in terms of the importance of the public house and licensee in both popular and pub culture. He pleaded that for 'the interest of future historians and students of twentieth-century life' all English innkeepers should begin to maintain diaries as '[t]hey have the example before them of Mr John Fothergill's *An Innkeeper's Diary*'.[100]

There is also heavy reliance on national, provincial and local newspapers.[101] Indeed, the press has provided the overwhelming number of sources for this

research. John Tosh argues that the very fact of publication 'sets a limit on the value' of printed sources such as newspapers, and that this represents 'only what was considered to be fit for public consumption – what governments were prepared to reveal, what journalists could elicit from tight-lipped inform- ants, what editors thought would gratify their readers, or MPs their constitu- ents'.[102] Darts, as a subject for reporting, was relatively insignificant in terms of column inches, appearing in the dailies only if connected with a court case or featured as part of a significant social event. In the local and provincial press, irregular darts reportage led to frustration when the outcomes of darts events mentioned one week were not followed up the next, being replaced by additional reports on the more popular pursuits such as cricket and football.

Although Tosh further argues that 'there is no substitute for the painstaking accumulation of evidence from the record sources of the period', with so little primary data available from such records this study became heavily reliant on the 'facts' as published in newspapers.[103] Thus it is crucial to understand exactly what contemporary darts reports recorded and represent. Some clarification of reports in national dailies has been possible by reference to the original reports that appeared in provincial newspapers and from oral testimony from those who were there at the time.

In this book the newspaper press is treated in a similar way to that adopted by Michael De Nie in his work on Irish identity and the British press, that is, by treating the press 'more broadly as a cultural product' rather than investigating how particular editors or owners shaped a specific newspaper's opinions.[104] At one level, close examination of political bias in newspapers is unneces- sary in the study of darts between the wars, as the game remained apolitical throughout the period. However, as we shall see, darts fitted exactly with the ideology and the cultural impact of Sunday newspapers and particularly the *News of the World*.

During the late nineteenth century the Sunday newspapers became the first successful mass newspapers, their popularity, argues Martin Conboy, being due to 'their ability to articulate aspects of authentic popular experi- ence of everyday life and to express it in language identifiable as belonging to its audience', language already familiar to readers as part of the traditions of popular theatre and fiction.[105] The popular press was capable of 'exerting a material even a transforming influence on social relations' but, whilst it is recognised that the emergence of the cheap news press became an issue of grave concern, the focus of this book will be how and for what reasons the editors of Sunday newspapers in general and the *News of the World* in particular

introduced darts to their pages and how their action managed to transform the game during the 1930s.[106]

During the 1930s Sunday newspapers including the *News of the World* and *The People* had higher circulations than any individual issue of the dailies but, as Adrian Bingham discovered in his research, such Sunday publications 'had their own traditions and idiosyncrasies and thus were not entirely comparable with popular dailies'. Bingham also found that, because they were published only weekly, 'it was not possible to trace events and unfolding debates in their pages in the same detail as was possible in the daily press'.[107] This is a problem encountered everywhere with darts research. The *News of the World* did provide a degree of consistency, perhaps the only consistency of reporting outside the specific darts press that emerged towards the end of the 1930s, but consistency only as far as its individual competition was concerned, weekly reports and updates being published throughout the season. *News of the World* darts reportage ceased after the competition finals in May each year and did not resume again until the commencement of the next season's competition in the autumn.[108]

In September 1937 the publication *Darts Weekly News* (later retitled as the *Darts and Sports Weekly News* and later still as the *Darts and Sports Review*) was launched and provided some continuity in darts reporting until its failure in February 1939. This newspaper provided a detailed yet naturally biased account of the success of darts and was especially useful in establishing the geographical spread of darts during the latter part of the decade and providing some evidence of the threat posed to the NDA by an alternative darts organisation, the British Darts Council (BDC), detail that was not available from any other source. *Darts World* magazine, established in 1972, a publication which remains the only one currently published in England dealing exclusively with the game, has also been extensively examined to ascertain facts concerning the perceived origins of darts and locate more up-to-date research into darts. It was also through *Darts World* and its sister publication, the annual, *Darts Player*, that early findings of this research were published. This led to a number of useful responses, the most significant of which was the as yet unpublished work undertaken by darts-playing amateur local historian Michael Gilmore, which provided an overview of the development of darts in South Shields during the 1930s.[109]

Responses from members of the public to letters published in local and provincial newspapers and *Darts World* magazine have also contributed significantly to this research. Fragmentary evidence from newspaper cuttings,

interviews, reports or informal discussions were translated into 'Letters to the Editor' and have revealed information and sources that might not otherwise have been uncovered. In addition, letters and e-mails exchanged with representatives of private companies and organisations on specific events have been fruitful.[110] However, the same warnings about the value of oral testimony naturally apply.

In 1995 Richard Cox, a member of the British Society of Sport History (BSSH), explored the potential of the internet in terms of sports history.[111] In a subsequent examination of sports history on the internet, Martin Johnes reinforced Cox's work and highlighted the primary resources which had been made available through the conduit of the worldwide web, such as government publications, and how various sports web sites, such as the Association of Football Statisticians, had provided 'a wealth of information and statistics'.[112] In addition, on-line access to major academic library catalogues, including the British Library, the Bodleian and the Cambridge University Library, and other major sources, such as the 1901 census and *The Times*, has not only greatly assisted the research of this book but also saved considerable time.

Sources accessed via the internet did not initially provide any new data specifically relating to darts. Web sites merely provided standard interpretations of popular texts and propagated existing information and perpetuated some of the myths surrounding the game. However, a darts history web site was launched by the author in November 2000 with the aim of providing a gateway for the research of darts, enhancing, expanding and raising awareness of this research and with the additional aim of attracting other researchers' attention and exchanging data.[113] Although the majority of input from visitors to the site has been in the form of questions, some useful contacts and essential, otherwise unobtainable, data have been obtained. For example, in 2003 the eighty-seven-year-old daughter of Jack Hood, an inter-war dartboard and dart manufacturer, made contact from New Zealand.[114]

Other key sources which have been crucial to the reconstruction of the social history of darts and its place within the context of the English public house include ephemera such as programmes, catalogues and advertising matter of the period. This book draws fragments together to enable patterns to be detected and the development of darts to be chronicled – something which has been achieved only with considerable difficulty.

As has been shown, there were no obvious caches of sources and there was no systematic coverage of pub games. Sources are both diverse and disparate, and there have been no scholastic footsteps in which to tread.[115] Only a

small number of county record office indices include references to darts and, without exception, those which were uncovered were scant. The four darts books, mentioned above, published during the inter-war years were supplemented more recently by further non-academic publications but they reveal a morass of fact, myths, inaccuracies and blatant fabrication, although a small number did provide invaluable leads.

Thus it is against this background of detailed examination of disparate sources and through intense library-based research of valuable documentary sources that the reconstruction of darts during the inter-war years is achieved. Thereby this book aims to fill a major gap in our knowledge of working-class leisure during the inter-war years. [116]

The structure of the book

Because of the complexity of the subject it has not been possible to write this book in a straightforward chronological way. Although the origins and the development of darts during the first two decades of the twentieth century can be dealt with in this way, the three key areas of research (the brewers, the organisation of the game and the darts industry) demand separate attention and are treated as discrete chapters. However, continuity is sustained by substantial cross-referencing throughout the work and the incorporation of the combined effects of these key elements in Chapter 7.

Chapter 2 is an attempt to reconstruct the origins of darts in England and to eradicate myths and fabrications which have until now distorted the history of the game. Chapter 3 continues this process for the first two decades of the twentieth century. These opening chapters reveal that darts in its modern form was really coming into being only around the turn of the twentieth century. The chapters also place in context the changes which were eventually to transform the game in the inter-war period.

Chapter 4 examines the inter-war English public house in the context of the expansion of mass leisure and reveals the threats to the brewing industry from new leisure choices and groups pressing for the improvement or alternatively the total banishment of the public house. The chapter demonstrates the way in which a regional pub game was utilised as a major tool by brewers as part of their improvement movement to contribute to securing their economic position and to preserving the future of the public house.

Chapter 5 identifies the organisations, such as the NDA, which developed darts as a new form of mass leisure and assesses their role in codifying and

promoting the game. It reveals that although darts became more popular in the south-east very quickly, often ousting other pub games as its popularity increased, the same was not true of the north, where the implementation of rules and indeed of a new form of darts to that traditionally played, severely restricted the success of the NDA.[117]

The sixth chapter reveals the development of the manufacturing industries that produced the essential goods and services which enabled darts to thrive. From small beginnings as part of the toy and fancy goods industry of the mid-to-late Victorian period the chapter traces the emergence of a vital new, yet relatively small, industry which responded to the increasing demand for darts, dartboards and related products from brewers and publicans as well as from people who wished to play the game at home. The development of specific suppliers of darts equipment, including the Nodor company, founded by industrial chemist Edward Leggatt, and the company owned by Jack Hood, both based in the East End of London, is critically examined, as they strove to create the material base on which darts could expand whilst at the same time forging strong links with the NDA and assisting in both the regularisation and standardisation of the sport.

Finally, Chapter 7 pulls all previous contributing elements and influences together and examines darts as a cultural phenomenon of the 1930s. By the end of the 1930s darts had spread across the country and participants came from all classes. Maurice Gorham described darts as a 'craze' which in the late 1930s 'threatened to change the very nature of the pubs' and actually resulted in the long-established social stratification of the pub being destabilised or, in Gorham's words, 'knocked sideways'.[118] In addition, the first darts sporting heroes emerge during this period, and the case of Harold Barker is analysed as an example of this developing trend.

The transformation of darts meant that anyone, regardless of age, sex, class or location, could access the game, either at home, at work (through company leagues, sports clubs, canteens or darts parlours) at the fairground, at local fêtes and in clubs and pubs. Darts became an invented part of traditional English culture during the inter-war period, being an amalgam of the actions of the brewers, the enthusiastic promotional zeal of the NDA, the entrepreneurial skills of the emergent darts industry, the business acumen and organisational prowess of licensees and the sponsorship, publicity and patronage of the media. This book represents the first academic research not only into darts but also into the English pub game.

Notes

1 *Daily Herald*, 6 February 1937, p. 8.

2 *Ibid*. Numbers are based on information provided by the National Darts Association (NDA).

3 *Radio Times*, 18 June 1937, p. 8. As will be seen in Chapter 5, the inaugural meeting to discuss the setting up of an 'English' darts association did not take place until 12 February 1925.

4 *News of the World Individual Darts Championship of England and Wales – Match Programme of the Championship Games* dated Wednesday 9 June 1948, p. 2; John Morris, *News of the World Darts Annual 1988/89* (London: Invincible Press, 1988), p. 23.

5 Jim Pike, 'Darts' in James Rivers (ed.), *The Sports Book* (London: Macdonald & Co., 1946), p. 95.

6 A. Wellington, *The Various Dart Games and How to Play Them* (London: Universal Publications, 1937), pp. 6 and 9.

7 A. P. Herbert, 'Darts just as pure and fair' in *Punch or The London Charivari*, 29 December 1937, p. 704; *Daily Herald*, 18 December 1937, p. 1; *Daily Sketch*, 18 December 1937, p. 1; *Daily Express*, 18 December 1937, p. 1; *Windsor, Slough and Eton Express*, 23 December 1937, p. 4.

8 *Brewer and Wine Merchant*, October 1939, p. 54.

9 Tony Bennett, Colin Mercer and Janet Woollacott (eds), *Popular Culture and Social Relations* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p. xi; John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 23; Stuart Hall, 'Notes on deconstructing "the popular"' in Raphael Samuel (ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 227; Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 88, *Marxism and Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 110, and *Keywords – A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Glasgow: Fontana/Croom Helm, 1979), p. 199.

10 Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, pp. 4 and 23.

11 John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture – An Introduction*, 4th edn (Harlow: Pearson, 2006), p. 53.

12 Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class – Studies in Working Class History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 179–238; E. P. Thompson, 'Time, work discipline and industrial capitalism' in his *Customs in Common* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), pp. 352–403.

13 In his work *The Road to Wigan Pier* George Orwell refers to the importance of small-scale pleasures to the working class, 'something a little bit "tasty"', including 'cut-price chocolate (five two-ounce bars for sixpence)', 'a twopenny ice-cream' and 'three penn'orth of chips'. (George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987, pp. 80–1 and 86; originally published London: Victor Gollancz, 1937.)

14 Valerie Hey, *Patriarchy and Pub Culture* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1986), pp. 10–11.

15 Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse – A Social History 1200–1830* (London: Longman, 1983), p. 154.

16 Ross McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class – Social Relations in Britain 1880–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 119–25.

17 George Orwell, *The Lion and the Unicorn – Socialism and the English Genius* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 39. (Originally published in London by Secker & Warburg in 1941.) The italics are Orwell's.

18 Although for pigeon racing see Martin Johnes, 'Pigeon racing and working-class culture in Britain *c*. 1870–1950', *Cultural and Social History*, 4:3 (2007), pp. 361–83.

19 Arthur R. Taylor, *The Guinness Book of Traditional Pub Games* (Enfield: Guinness Publishing, 1992), p. 8.

20 Alun Howkins and John Lowerson, *Trends in Leisure* (Brighton: University of Sussex, 1979).

21 *Ibid.*, Preface (no page number) and p. 61. Robert Graves and Alan Hodge's *The Long Weekend – A Social History of Great Britain 1918–1939* was actually published in 1941 in London by Faber & Faber and has indeed afforded valuable leads to the author.

22 Howkins and Lowerson, *Trends in Leisure*, Preface.

23 C. Delisle Burns, *Leisure in the Modern World* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1932), p. 7.

24 Henry Durant, *The Problem of Leisure* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1938), p. 1.

25 Mass Observation, *The Pub and the People – A Worktown Study* (Welwyn Garden City: Seven Dials Press, 1970), p. 5. (Originally published London: Victor Gollancz, 1943.) The group's earlier findings were revealed in Charles Madge and Tom Harrisson, *The First Year's Work 1937–1938 by Mass Observation* (London: Lindsay Drummond, 1938).

26 John A. R. Pimlott, *The Englishman's Holiday – A Social History* (London: Faber & Faber, 1947). Pimlott's work has been described by Howkins and Lowerson as 'a masterpiece' and by James Walvin as 'that classic account'. Howkins and Lowerson, *Trends in Leisure*, p. 76; James Walvin, *Beside the Seaside – A Social History of the Popular Seaside Holiday* (London: Allen Lane, 1978), p. 11.

27 Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957); *The Guardian*, 7 February 2004, downloaded 23 August 2006.

28 *Ibid.*

29 Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, p. 17.

30 *The Guardian*, 7 February 2004, downloaded 23 August 2006.

31 E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963).

32 Peter Bailey, 'The politics and poetics of modern British leisure', *Rethinking History*, 3:2 (1999), p. 139.

33 Emma Griffin, 'Popular culture in industrializing England', *Historical Journal*, 45:3 (2002), p. 619.

34 Robert W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society 1700–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

35 *Ibid.*, p. 170.

36 Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution c. 1780–c. 1880* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), p. 22.

37 Griffin, 'Popular culture in industrializing England', p. 621. See also Emma Griffin, *England's Revelry – A History of Popular Sports and Pastimes 1660–1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

38 Adrian Harvey, *The Beginnings of a Commercial Sporting Culture in Britain 1793–1850* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), pp. 2–4. Another historian who argues that there was no leisure vacuum is Richard Holt. See Richard Holt, *Sport and the British – A Modern History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 349.

39 Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class – Studies in English Working Class History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 198.

40 Clark, *The English Alehouse*, p. 333.

41 Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians – The Temperance Question in England 1815–1872* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971).

42 Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, p. 49.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

44 Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England – Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control 1830–1885* (London: Methuen & Co., 1978).

45 Eric Hobsbawm, *Worlds of Labour – Further Studies in the History of Labour* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1984), pp. 178 and 185–6.

46 Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Working-class culture and working-class politics in London 1870–1900: notes on the remaking of a working class' in his *Languages of Class – Studies in Working Class History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 237.

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48 Jeffrey Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace – Cinema and Society in Britain 1930–1939* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984).

49 John K. Walton, *The English Seaside Resort – A Social History 1750–1914* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983), *Fish and Chips and the British Working Class 1870–1940* (London: Leicester University Press, 1992), *The British Seaside: Holidays and Resorts in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) and, with Gary S. Cross, *The Playful Crowd – Pleasure Places in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

50 Asa Briggs, *The Birth of Broadcasting* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), *The Golden Age of the Wireless* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965) and *The Social History of the Media – From Gutenberg to the Internet* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005); Dan L. LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy – Mass Communication and the Cultivated Mind in Britain between the Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Martin Conboy, *The Press and Popular Culture* (London: Sage, 2002), p. 81, and *Tabloid Britain – Constructing a Community through Language* (London: Routledge, 2006).

51　James J. Nott, *Music for the People – Popular Music and Dance in Interwar Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). For Richards's review see *Albion*, 36:1 (2004), pp. 176–7.

52　George Long's contemporary work *English Inns and Road Houses* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1937), pp. 177–84, provides a general outline of the Americanisation of some suburban public houses into roadhouses. For more recent, and academic, research see David W. Gutzke's pioneering work *Pubs and Progressives – Reinventing the Public House in England 1896–1960* (De Kalb IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006), pp. 164–5.

53　David Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (London: Penguin Books, 2000).

54　McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class*, pp. 1–41 and 138–66.

55　Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures – England 1918–1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 385.

56　Andrew Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty – Working Class Culture in Salford and Manchester 1900–1939* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992).

57　Clare Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England 1920–1960* (Manchester: University Press, 2000), pp. 70–3 and 153–5.

58　Peter Bailey, 'Leisure, culture and the historian: reviewing the first generation of leisure historiography', *Leisure Studies*, 8 (1989), p. 118; Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England*, p. 188. See also Peter Bailey's later review of the historiography of leisure, 'The politics and poetics of modern British leisure – a late twentieth-century review', *Rethinking History*, 3:2 (1999), pp. 131–75.

59　Richard Holt, 'Sport and history: the state of the subject in Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, 7:2 (1996), p. 231.

60　James Walvin, 'Sport, social history and the historian', *British Journal of Sports History*, 1:1 (1984), p. 5.

61　Richard Holt, '"No ideas but in things": Tony Mason's *Association Football and English Society*', *Sports Historian*, 22:1 (2002), p. 3. (Holt's article includes a plea for a new edition.)

62　Dennis Brailsford, *Bareknuckles – A Social History of Prize-fighting* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1988); Tony Collins, *Rugby's Great Split – Class, Culture and the Origins of Rugby League Football* (London: Frank Cass, 1998); Eric Halladay, *Rowing in England – A Social History: the Amateur Debate* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990); Mike Huggins, *Flat Racing and British Society 1790–1914 – A Social and Economic History* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), *Horseracing and the British 1919–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003) and *The Victorians and Sport* (London: Hambledon & London, 2004); Dave Russell, *Football and England – A Social History of Association Football in England 1863–1995* (Preston: Carnegie Publishing, 1997); Keith Sandiford, *Cricket and the Victorians* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994); Jack Williams, *Cricket and England – A Cultural and Social History of the Inter-war Years* (London: Frank Cass, 1999).

63　Mason, *Association Football and English Society*, p. 6. James Walvin also recognised these difficulties in researching sports history, stating in 1986 that such source material was 'scattered in a plethora of often inaccessible forms and publications.'

(Walvin, 'Sport, Social History and the Historian', p. 6.)

64 Holt, '"No ideas but in things"', pp. 1–6.

65 Neil Tranter, *Sport, Economy and Society in Britain 1750–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 13–17.

66 Onions, C. T. (ed.), *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary of Historical Principles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, 3rd edn, 1978), II, p. 2086.

67 Holt, *Sport and the British*, pp. 192–3; Dennis Brailsford, *Sport, Time and Society – The British at Play* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 150–1, and *British Sport – A Social History* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1992), pp. 104 and 117; Tony Collins and Wray Vamplew, *Mud, Sweat and Beers – A Cultural History of Sport and Alcohol* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), pp. 32–3. The latter's references to darts were provided with the assistance of the author of this book. (See acknowledgement in *Mud, Sweat and Beers*, p. 3.)

68 John Lowerson, 'Stoolball – conflicting values in the revivals of a "traditional Sussex game"', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 133 (1995), pp. 263–74.

69 *Ibid*., p. 263.

70 Darts was first included in an academic work on sport in 1989. See Holt, *Sport and the British*, pp. 192–3. The only exception of any significance was the research undertaken by Tom Harrisson and his Mass Observation team during the inter-war period and published in 1943 on the town of Bolton which featured a whole chapter on sport, games and gambling within the pub which included a specific section on darts. (Mass Observation, *The Pub and the People – A Worktown Study*, London: Cresset Library, 1987, pp. 284–314. For darts see pp. 299–301.)

71 Paddy Whannel and Dana Hodgdon, *The Book of Darts* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1978), p. 72; John Young, *How to Play Darts and New Games for the Dart Board* (London: W. Foulsham & Co., 1938), p. 9. When Young's book was edited and republished in 1981 the reference to origins was not revised but deleted. (John Young, *Winning Darts*, ed. Geoff Martin, London: W. Foulsham & Co., 1981).

72 For example, in 2004 former World Masters champion Dave Whitcombe revealed that he wrote his book *How to Play Darts* (London: Hamlyn, 1981) in a very short time to meet a deadline. He told *Darts Player* magazine, 'That … book took me about a fortnight to write – three weeks tops … ' (*Darts Player 2005*, p. 11.)

73 Rupert Croft-Cooke, *Darts* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1936), p. 8.

74 Williams, *Cricket and England*, p. 68.

75 Croft-Cooke, *Darts*; Wellington, *The Various Darts Games and How to Play Them*, John Young, *How to Play Darts and New Games for the Dart Board* (London: W. Foulsham & Co., 1938) and Alan and Geoffrey D'Egville, *Darts with the Lid Off* (London: Cassell & Co., 1938). Keith Turner, whilst describing Croft-Cooke's book as 'insubstantial … very lightweight in content … and with an extremely patronising style … ' did recognise that the importance of this book lies in 'the valuable picture it gives of the status of the game at that time.' (Keith Turner, *Darts – The Complete Book of the Game* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1980), p. 107.)

76 Rupert Croft-Cooke, *Darts*, with a special chapter by Frank Wolfe, editor of *The Dart* (London: Findon Publications, n.d. but *c*. 1947); Frank Wolfe (ed.), *1949 Darts*

Players Annual (Feltham: Darts Publications & Supplies, 1948); George Caley, *How to Improve your Darts* (London: Photo Instruction Books, n.d. but *c.* 1950).

77 Noel E. Williamson, *Darts* (Kingswood: Elliot Right Way Books, 1968), p. 14.

78 Arthur R. Taylor, *Pub Games* (Frogmore: Mayflower Books, 1976), pp. 9–29, and Turner, *Darts – The Complete Book of the Game*, pp. 93–115.

79 Timothy Finn, *The Watney Book of Pub Games* (London: Queen Anne Press, 1966), pp. 43–8, and Derek Brown, *The Guinness Book of Darts* (Enfield: Guinness Super-latives, 1981), pp. 8–18.

80 Arthur R. Taylor, *The Guinness Book of Traditional Pub Games* (Enfield: Guinness Publishing, 1992), pp. 13–30. In the 1992 work the section on darts was produced with substantial input from the author.

81 For example, in the 1960s Williamson, *Darts*, p. 14, wrote, 'It has been said that the Pilgrim Fathers amused themselves by playing darts aboard the *Mayflower* in the year 1620.' By the late 1970s the myth was appearing in the majority of books about darts; for example, Bob McLeod and Jay Cohen, *Darts Unlimited* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1977, p. 13) wrote, 'there are references, in the *Mayflower's* logs, to darts as a pastime of the Pilgrims on board the vessel', whilst Peter Bills (*Sportsviewers Guide – Darts* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1983), p. 4), stated that 'Crude "darts" are said to have been used by the Pilgrim Fathers on board the *Mayflower* as they sailed to the New World in 1620.' The final seal of approval came in 1973 when an entry in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (14th edn) read, 'Darts is recorded as a pastime of the Pilgrim Fathers on board the *Mayflower* in 1620.' This myth was finally dispelled by research published by the American darts researcher Dan Peek in 2001. (Dan William Peek, *To the Point – The Story of Darts in America*, Columbia MO: Totem Pointe, 2001, pp. 7–8.)

82 Compare the court case of William Annakin in 1908 as given by Annakin's grand-son (also William Annakin) in letters to the author dated 20 and 29 June 1988 with the '"Game on" in court' in Sid Waddell, *Bedside Darts* (London: Stanley Paul, 1985), p. 32. The importance of this case to the history and development of the sport of darts is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

83 T[erence] H[anbury] White, *England Have my Bones* (London: Futura, 1981; first published by Collins, 1936); Graves and Hodge, *The Long Weekend*; Croft-Cooke, *Darts*; Mass Observation, *The Pub and the People*.

84 Whilst the work of best-selling popular writers such as H[enry] V[ollam] Morton (*In Search of England*, London: Methuen & Co., 1927, *The Call of England*, London: Methuen & Co., 1928, and *I Saw Two Englands*, London: Methuen & Co., 1942) has revealed no useful information about the English public house and nothing about pub games, others, for example C. B. Ford (ed.), *The Legacy of England* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1935), features a whole chapter (Ivor Brown, 'The inn', pp. 190–216) in praise and criticism of the inn and the games played within. T. H. White devotes a significant amount of text to the playing of darts. (*England Have my Bones*, pp. 181–6.)

85 Paul Thompson *The Voice of the Past – Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd edn, 1988), pp. 2 and 113.

86 John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 3rd edn, 2002), pp. 300 and 309.

87 Eric Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times – A Twentieth Century Life* (London: Abacus, 2003), p. 341. (Originally published London: Allen Lane, 2002.)

88 Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, pp. 91 and 303–4

89 Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty*, pp. 30, 34–5 and 58.

90 Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, p. 188.

91 Elizabeth Roberts, *A Woman's Place – An Oral History of Working Class Women 1890–1940* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1985), pp. 2, 3, 6 and 122–3.

92 Interviews conducted by Patrick Chaplin with John Ross, 24 August 1988 and 24 January 1989; Ernest Deverell, 12 December 1991; John F. Hill, 3 June 1994; Stanley R. Lowy, MBE, Managing Director of Unicorn Products, 16 August 1996.

93 Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971), p. 5.

94 Edie Beed, *Seventy Years behind Bars* (Exeter: published by the author, 1984); John G. Showers, *Welcome Inn* (Derby: Pilgrim Press, 1952).

95 John Fothergill, *An Innkeeper's Diary* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1931), p. ix.

96 John Fothergill, *Confessions of an Innkeeper* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1938).

97 Thomas Burke, *The English Inn* (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1931), p. 1.

98 Thomas Burke, *The Beauty of England* (London: George G. Harrap & Co., 1933), p. 153.

99 For example, 'The sound of our horn brought the landlord to the door; a portly landlord with a jovial look, who with a beaming smile bade us welcome – a welcome as though, out of the whole world, we were the very people he desired most to see' and 'Next morning we resumed our wanderings, the good-natured and portly landlord – may his shadow never grow less! – coming to the door in the pleasing old-fashioned manner to bid us good-day and to wish us a prosperous journey – one of the amenities of road travel.' (James John Hissey, *Untravelled England*, London: Macmillan & Co., 1906, pp. 68 and 89.)

100 Burke, *The Beauty of England*, pp. 153–4. (The italics are Burke's.) Few of his contemporaries heeded Burke's words but, fortunately, since the 1950s increasing numbers of publicans (both male and female) have published their memoirs, though only Beed and Showers were of assistance to this study. For examples of other autobiographies see Tom Girtin *Come, Landlord!* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1957), Margaret Reynolds, *Prisoner in the Bar* (London: Phoenix House, 1958), Tim Wilkinson, *We Ran a Cornish Pub* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967), Sean Treacy, *The Smell of Broken Glass* (London: Tom Stacey, 1973), Martin Green, *A Year in the Drink* (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1982), Kit Chapman, *An Innkeeper's Diary – September 1996–September 1997* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), and George East, *A Year behind Bars – The Publican's Tale* (Portsmouth: La Puce Publications, 2001).

101 The problems inherent in utilising newspapers and oral testimony are discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

102 Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, p. 65.

103 *Ibid*.

104 Michael W. De Nie, *The Eternal Paddy – Irish Identity and the British Press* (Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), p. 28.

105 Martin Conboy, *The Press and Popular Culture* (London: Sage, 2002), pp. 80–1.

106 Aled Jones, *Powers of the Press – Newspapers, Power and the Public in Nineteenth Century England* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), pp. xi, 7–8.

107 Adrian Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Interwar Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), p. 14.

108 For example, in 1930, following the report of the final in the *News of the World* on 11 May (p. 16) and a brief mention of the semi-finals of an NDA team championship in the issue dated 18 May (p. 16), no further mention of darts was made in the newspaper for a period of four months until the issue dated 19 October (p. 16), when the commencement of the 1930/31 tournament was announced.

109 Michael Gilmore, 'The Birth of Darts in South Shields', unpublished manuscript dated 7 September 2001.

110 Appearances on local and national radio and television by the author have also secured valuable data.

111 Richard W. Cox, *The Internet as a Resource for the Sports Historian* (Frodsham: Sports History Publishing, 1995).

112 Martin Johnes, 'Sports history on the internet,' *BSSH Newsletter*, 15 (spring 2002), pp. 20–1.

113 The web site address is www.patrickchaplin.com. It should be noted that this is a 'popular' rather than an academic web site. Examination of the internet has shown that a great number of darts-related web sites now have this web site as the key site to link to for darts history. (The web site was upgraded and relaunched on 10 December 2006.)

114 Sally Hood, e-mails to Patrick Chaplin between 2 October 2003 and 13 May 2005. Up to that time, enquiries undertaken in England over a number of years had failed to reveal any trace of the Hood family.

115 Richard Holt does touch on the subject of darts in two pages of his work *Sport and the British*, pp. 192–3, but it contains some inaccuracies. Most recent references to darts in scholarly reference works have been provided by the author, including the *Encyclopedia of British Sport*, ed. Richard W. Cox, Grant Jarvie and Wray Vamplew (Oxford: ABC–CLIO, 2000), pp. 102–3, the *International Encyclopedia of Women and Sports*, ed. Karen Christensen, Allen Guttmann and Gertrud Pfister (New York: Macmillan Reference, 2001), I, pp. 311–14, and the *Encyclopedia of Traditional British Rural Sports*, ed. Tony Collins, John Martin and Wray Vamplew (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), pp. 95–8. In addition, assistance has been provided to other scholars concerning darts, including Paul Jennings, *The Public House in Bradford 1770–1970* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1995), p. 206 (for acknowledgement see p. 289), and Collins and Vamplew *Mud, Sweat and Beers*, pp. 32–3 (acknowledgement, p. 3).

116 Some of the findings of this research were presented under the title 'Game on!

Darts in the Interwar Years' at the British Society of Sport History (BSSH) Conference held at the University of Glamorgan, 3 September 2005.

117 Vivian Ogilvie, *Our Times – A Social History 1912–1952* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1953), p. 182.

118 Maurice Gorham, *Back to the Local* (London: Percival Marshall & Co., 1949), p. 76.

2

The origins of darts

> The true origins of the game [of darts] seem to be lost in the mists of alehouse smoke.[1]

In order to provide a firm foundation on which to build an understanding of the social history and development of modern darts, it is important to explore the origins of the game. No one has written authoritatively about its origins, for the very good reason that our knowledge remains sketchy. This chapter, unlike the rest, takes the form of a rehearsal of possibilities.

There are few certainties about the origins of the game of darts. What is clear is that by the mid-to-late nineteenth century darts were being imported from France in great numbers primarily to satisfy a demand from fairgrounds and the toy industry and then, within a relatively short time, into public houses. This made possible the modern game of darts. Before the nineteenth century, darts were extant in various forms, as 'missive weapons' and as a mode of amusement, including the form in which small darts were blown through a tube at a concentric miniature archery target or small random-numbered target, known as 'puff-and-dart'. This chapter will show that modern darts has its roots partly in the French version of the game, known as *flechettes*, and partly in the English game of 'puff-and-dart'.

This reconstruction will also critique the ill formed guesswork of non-academic writers on the subject and therefore bring to an end the need to employ such valueless statements as Peter Arnold's 'If the modern game of darts developed from games where men threw pointed "sticks" at targets, then darts can be said to be hundreds of years old.'[2]

Despite over thirty years having elapsed since Michael Brander's comment at the head of this chapter, his statement remains indicative of the general view of the history of darts.[3] In the 1990s academic research touched upon the game but failed to reveal any details about where and how darts began.[4]