

## THE HISTORY OF THE WICKFORD & DISTRICT DART LEAGUE

The Wickford & District Dart League (W.D.D.L.) was founded in 1945 at a meeting held in the Public Bar of the Quart pot in Runwell. Eight Teams competed for the Championship Shield: The Castle Hotel (Wickford), The Kings Head (Great Burstead), The Quart Pot (Runwell), The Bell (Rettendon), The Plough (South Green), The Whalebone (Sth. Woodham Ferrers), The White Swan Hotel (Wickford) and The Shepherd & Dog (Crays Hill). The Castle Hotel, were the first winners of the Championship Shield and the Kings Head, were runners-up.

The following table was published in the Wickford Times and Essex Independant (W.T.) on the 26th April 1946.

	P.	W.	L.	PT.	
1. CASTLE HOTEL	14	11	3	22	The Castle were drawn away to the Kings Head
2. KINGS HEAD	14	10	4	20	in match twelve needing to win the match for the
3. QUART POT	14	8	6	16	Championship. They managed to scrape through by
4. THE BELL	14	7	7	14	two legs to one, which was just as well, because they
5. PLOUGH	14	6	8	12	lost the return match at the Kings Head the following
6. WHALEBONE	14	6	8	12	week by the reverse score.
7. WHITE SWAN	14	6	8	12	A supper was organised to take place at the Public
8. SHEPHERD & DOG	14	2	12	4	Hall in Wickford on Tuesday May 7th 1946, at which
					the Shield and Cups were presented.

The Castle Hotel were Champions once again in the second season with a six point advantage over second placed Basildon Bull. The Individual's Competition was introduced in 1946 and was won by Stan Tatam of the Quart Pot, with Fred Gowlett of the Castle runner-up. The President of the League, Mr. A. F. Colverd presented a silver cup to league, to be held by the Individual's Champion for one year. This Cup which was known as the "President's Cup" was replaced by a larger trophy in 1969, because it had been damaged and the base could not take any more names on it.



Sixteen clubs started the 1946/47 season, but both the Railway, Woodham Ferrers and the Bull, Pitsea dropped out before the end, leaving fourteen.

Top Three 1946/47	P.	W.	L.	PTS.
1. Castle Hotel	26	20	6	40
2. Basildon Bull	26	17	9	34
3. Plough South Green	26	16	10	32

### **STAN TATAM**

For the 1947 Annual Opening Meeting Mr. A. J. Hart the former manager of the Castle Hotel made a special journey from London to preside over it. The meeting was held at the White Swan Hotel Wickford on Wednesday October 8th and eleven Clubs expressed their desire to join the League: Quart Pot, Castle Hotel, Shepherd & Dog, Kings Head, Harrows, Plough, Rettendon Bell, Fox & Hounds, White Swan Hotel, Windmill (South Hanningfield) and the Whalebone.

The Chairman complimented the Clubs on their determination to keep fixtures during the bad weather of the previous season and both the Secretary and Treasurer presented satisfactory reports.

It was decided that matches would be played between 8-A-Side Teams and the Individuals Championship would be continued, with the proceeds to go to the assisting of the Wickford Memorial Fund and furthering Athletics in the District.

Mr. R. W. Hardes, the Landlord of the Shepherd & Dog was elected as President in place of Mr. A. J. Hart, who resigned, having left the district. Mr. A. Gore was elected Hon. Secretary, Mr. A. H. Guiver elected Hon. Treasurer.

The Quart Pot Runwell were League Champions in the 1947-48 season, with the Castle having to settle for runners-up this time. I am told that the Quart Pot won the Championship in the last match of the season, when The Plough failed to turn up and they were awarded a walkover. They celebrated their success at winning the Championship by 27 members going by coach to Clacton and spending an enjoyable day in brilliant sunshine.

Stan Tatam of the Quart Pot won the Individual Championship again, with Mr. H. F. Herridge of the Harrows as runner-up receiving the "Thompson Cup," which was presented to the League by Mr. J. A. Thompson the Landlord of the Kings Head. The Pair's Competition was introduced in 1947 and the first Champions were Jack Whalley and Reg. Woodman from the Castle Hotel, with Johnny Hawkins and Harry (Ginger) Crew from the Shepherd & Dog the runner-ups. The winners were presented with the Winifred Hart Cup and silver medals.

W.T.	20.12.47	.	P.	W.	L.	Pt.
1.	Castle Hotel	(2)	7	7	0	14
2.	Quart Pot	(1)	7	6	1	12
3.	Shepherd & Dog		7	5	2	10
4.	Kings Head		7	4	3	8
5.	Harrows		7	3	4	6
6.	Plough		5	3	2	6
7.	Rettendon Bell		7	2	5	4
8.	Fox & Hounds		6	2	4	4
9.	White Swan		5	2	3	4
10.	Windmill (Sth.Hann.)		7	1	6	2
11.	Whalebone		5	0	5	0

A silent tribute was paid at the 1948 Annual Opening Meeting in memory of Mr. William Dowland, licensee of the Whalebone Public House, Woodham, and vice-president of the League. Mr. H. F. Carter, the League Chairman said that a floral tribute had been sent on behalf of the League members to the funeral which had taken place on that day. Twelve Clubs were represented at the meeting, as compared with eleven in the League last year. The Chairman complimented all clubs on completing their fixtures for the previous season despite the petrol ban. Proceeds of the President's Cup Competition had realized £35 for the Wickford Memorial Fund and the sum had been earmarked for furthering athletics in the district. The Treasurer's report showed a deficit of £9.13s.5d. and it was agreed that the proceeds of the President's Cup, for the 1948-49 season would be paid into the League Funds in order to put the League on a sounder financial footing. In order that members were not at a disadvantage in the national darts competitions it was decided the League adopt the eight feet throw instead of the nine feet throw previously used. I am told several members still threw from the longer distance for quite some time. The delegates at the meeting also voted in favour of playing, five pairs, per side, best of three 401.

Mr. H. F. Carter was elected as Chairman; Mr. A. Gore, Hon. Secretary; Mr. A. Guiver, Hon. Treasurer; Committee, Messrs. Hards, Wood, George Patmore and Archibald Carter.

The Castle won the Championship for their third time in the 1948-49 season with the White Horse Ramsden runners-up. The Finals of the Individual's and Pair's championships were played at the Harrows on Wednesday 11th May 1949. In the Individual's, Johnny Hawkins of the Shepherd & Dog beat Roy Wilson of the Plough 2-0 and in the Pair's Charlie Saffell and Jim Dorking (White Horse) beat John Palmer and E. Allen (Whalebone) 2-1.

A match between the league champions and The Rest, was won by The Castle by four games to three. The presentation of trophies was held on Wednesday May 25th 1949 for all members and their guests at Runwell Village Hall. The Trophies were presented by Mr. C. James, the darts secretary of the Southend United Supporters' Club. The entertainment for the evening was provided by Eric Ricketts (of Bert Easton's Blue Lagoon Band), Fred Palmer (comedian), Terry O'Dare (vocalist and comedian), Baron (conjurer), and Anthony Edwards (Comedy). Catering for the evening was by Mr. Grossmith of the Tudor Cafe, Runwell. Two new perpetual trophies were presented to the league on the night. Mr. Albert Fawcett a playing member of the Castle Hotel presented a trophy for the runners-up of the League. The trophy is peculiar looking, best described as a three handled tankard and over the years many teams have filled it with "cocktails" to celebrate their success. Frank Carter, the League Chairman, also presented a cup for the runners-up of the Pair's competition.

In those early days of the W.D.D.L. if members wished to know how they were placed in the League they would have been able to find out by looking in the Wickford or Billericay Times.

The results of the matches were sent to the League Secretary and he would pass them on to Adcocks the local news agents in Wickford. The results and the table were then published in the local newspapers and if you were not keeping your own records, you had to rely on what was published and as is still the case today, misprints happened. My research was done by reading those old newspapers and the 1948-49 season's results were covered quite comprehensively. Most of the Cup draws and results were published and so I decided to put together my own 'Final Table' and here is the result of my efforts.

MY TABLE FOR 1948-49	P.	W.	L.	F.	A.	PT.
1. CASTLE HOTEL	24	18	6	76	44	36
2. RETTENDON BELL	24	17	7	69	51	34
3. QUART POT	24	16	8	70	50	32
4. WHITE HORSE	24	16	8	69	51	32
5. FOX & HOUNDS	23	15	8	62	53	30
6. WINDMILL	23	13	10	63	52	26
7. PLOUGH	24	13	11	64	56	26
. WHITE SWAN	24	13	11	64	56	26
9. SHEPHERD & DOG	24	10	14	52	68	20
10. KINGS HEAD	24	9	15	53	67	18
11. NAGS HEAD	24	6	18	48	72	12
12. HARROWS	24	4	20	44	76	8
13. WHALEBONE	24	4	20	41	79	8

THE TABLE PUBLISHED IN THE NEWSPAPER:

	P.	W.	L.	F.	A.	PT.
1. CASTLE HOTEL	24	18	6	76	44	36
2. WHITE HORSE	24	17	7	68	47	34
3. RETTENDON BELL	24	17	7	69	51	34
4. QUART POT	24	16	8	70	50	32
5. FOX & HOUNDS	24	16	8	63	52	32
6. WHITE SWAN	24	13	11	64	56	26
7. PLOUGH	24	13	11	63	57	26
8. WINDMILL	24	12	12	59	51	24
9. SHEPHERD & DOG	24	10	14	53	67	20
10. KINGS HEAD	24	9	15	53	67	18
11. NAGS HEAD	24	6	18	48	72	12
12. HARROWS	24	5	19	43	77	10
13. WHALEBONE	24	4	20	41	79	8

I can agree with the published tables up to and including the one in the (W.T. 1.4.49.), but after that the tables change quite considerably. Three more tables were printed which included the 'Final Table' on the 13th of May 1949. The first of the three showed the Castle Hotel top with two matches to play, the White Horse had completed their fixtures and had the exact record as 'my table' shows and apart from the Fox & Hounds and the Plough having slight differences over their legs for and against, I would agree with the table. The next Table shows many changes from what I have worked out and all of a sudden the White Horse have gained an extra win and their legs for and against for some reason do not come to the correct total of 120. All I do know is, that the winners and runner-ups are engraved on the respective trophies and that is the way I would prefer to leave it. I have published wrong results myself in the past, due to result cards being filled in wrong or more often than not, me typing it wrong, so as I cannot find an explanation I will assume that the final table is correct and the results published were wrong. Mr. Frank Carter when presiding at the presentation, congratulated "The White Horse, in their first year of re-entering the League on becoming runners-up, by the close margin of a decimal point", so who am I to question it?

The Quart Pot warmed up for the start of the 1949-1950 season with a friendly home match against a team from Stone near Southminster which the visitors won 2-1. As an added attraction Stan Tatam the Quart Pot Captain was supposed to play Jack Hood "News of The World" ex-champion, but a

leg injury prevented Jack from attending. Stone provided a worthy opponent for Stan Tatam and Stan eventually won a keenly contested match.

The Team Knockout competition was introduced in the 1949-1950 season and the first winners were The Fox and Hounds with the Nags Head as runners ups. The Fox and Hounds were presented with the "William Tell Cup" which was donated by two keen darts enthusiasts, Mr. L. A. Garbett and Mr. W. J. Copeman and the runners-up, were presented with the "Arthur Rose Cup," which was donated by Mr. Arthur Rose a keen and popular member of the Quart Pot dart club. The Championship Shield was won by The White Horse with Castle Hotel having to settle for runners-ups.

The League had reverted to the best of three Team Race format for the 1949-50 season with two points awarded for a win. The Wickford Times reported on the match between the Shepherd & Dog and the Castle Hotel, which the Castle won 2-1. Fred Gowlett (Castle) scored 120 twice in the final leg and Fred Kemp finished the match with double twenty. In the match between the Plough and the White Horse, one of the Plough players was unlucky not to finish on 65 in the first leg, when his dart for double ten fell out and just to add to his misery, A. Carter shot out in the next throw on 98, 60-20-double 9. The White Horse then turned the screw with S. Newton scoring well, including 105 and C. Saffell hitting the double ten for the match. The White Horse were still undefeated at the half way stage of the season with the Castle six points behind after losing twice to the Plough and once to the Nags Head.

The Plough had a new venue to play from at the end of the 1949-1950 season when they moved in to a prefabricated building next door to their old Pub. Their new venue was originally sited behind the Plough in Hutton and used as a dance hall before it was expertly dismantled and transported to Great Burstead. The bars in the prefab, the doors and many other fittings were sent down from bombed public houses in London. Jim Dorking and C. Saffell (White Horse) won the Pairs for the second year running, F. Gibson and Harry(Ginger) Crew (Shepherd and Dog) were runner-ups. Jack Harvey (Castle Hotel) beat F. Gibson (Shepherd & Dog) in the Individuals Championship Final.

In the 1950-51 season the format for matches changed to ten- a side individuals, played over the best of three 201. The Finals of the cup competitions were held at the Harrows and were watched by a crowd of around two hundred and the standard of play was reported to be high. For the second year in succession, the "White Horse" won the League Championship, and Rettendon Bell were runners-up on games average. The Plough after a shaky start to the season, put up a fine show to finish level with the Rettendon Bell, but were placed third, because the Bell had the better games average. At the half way stage of the season the Nags Head were only two points behind the White Horse and were still undefeated, with four draws. They then came up against the White Horse and lost 6-4 away and 7-3 at home. The New Plough put paid to any ideas that the Nags had of League Honours in matches seventeen and eighteen, by winning both matches 6-4. The Castle Hotel were another team well poised at the half way mark, and after beating the Bell 7-3 in match thirteen, with the White Horse still to play they must have fancied their chances. It was not to be, because the Bell came back the following week and beat them 6-4, they drew with the Kings Head away, drew with the White Horse away, lost at home to the White Horse and lost their final match of the season away to the Whalebone.

	P.	W.	D.	L.	F.	A.	Pts.
1. White Horse	20	17	1	2	140	50	35
2. Rettendon Bell	20	12	4	4	115	85	28
3. The New Plough	20	13	2	5	109	91	28
4. Nags Head	20	11	5	4	118	82	27

The Rettendon Bell were presented with the "Albert Fawcett" Cup. The Nags Head beat the New Plough by two legs to one in the Team Knockout Competition, Jim Dorking and C. Saffell (White Horse) completed a hat trick of victories in the Pairs, beating D. Clark and Frank Thorington from the Rettendon Bell. The Individuals' title went once again, to Jack Harvey, playing for the Castle Hotel, beating John Palmer from the Whalebone in the final. Jack Had a tough semi-final against Stan Tatam (White Horse) with the match going to three legs. In the final leg both Jack and Stan both scored 140 with Jack also hitting two tons and a 58 shot out. The time of play was 8 pm. and as the closing time in 1950 was 10 pm. it was important to get started on time.

2nd Round Team Knock out (commencing April 23rd):  
White Horse v. Nags Head; Castle v. Shepherd & Dog;  
New Plough v. Kings Head; Harrows v. Rett. Bell.

01/02/57

The match between the Quart Pot and the Crane was well worth seeing, and supporters see some very good games.

Although the final score was 6-3 to the Quart Pot, it was not an easy win, all games were close. Scores of 140 were made by C.Webb and C.Smith, Holland 121, and scorers of 117 and 100 were frequent.

3.1.52. W.T. There was a fire at the factory of Scott's Keep-Dry Dartboard Company on the Arterial road Laindon where hundreds of dart boards intended for export were destroyed.

22.2.52. W.T. City Coaches changed hands, The new owners were, Westcliff Motor Services. The Coaches colour was to changed from brown and cream to red.

16.4.54. W.T. The Crane became the first Basildon New Town Pub.

18.2.49. W.T. National service registration for men born between January 1, 1931, and March 31, 1931 under the National Services Acts on Saturday, February 26.