STUDIES IN POPULAR CULTURE

Darts in England, 1900–39

A social history

PATRICK CHAPLIN

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General editor: Professor Jeffrey Richards

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STUDIES IN POPULAR CULTURE

There has in recent years been an explosion of interest in culture and cultural studies. The impetus has come from two directions and out of two different traditions. On the one hand, cultural history has grown out of social history to become a distinct and identifiable school of historical investigation. On the other hand, cultural studies has grown out of English literature and has concerned itself to a large extent with contemporary issues. Neverthe less, there is a shared project, its aim, to elucidate the meanings and values implicit and explicit in the art, literature, learning, institutions and everyday behaviour within a given society. Both the cultural historian and the cultural studies scholar seek to explore the ways in which a culture is imagined, represented and received, how it interacts with social processes, how it contributes to individual and collective identities and world views, to stability and change, to social, political and economic activities and programmes. This series aims to provide an arena for the cross-fertilisation of the discipline, so that the work of the cultural historian can take advantage of the most useful and illuminating of the theoretical developments and the cultural studies scholars can extend the purely historical underpinnings of their investigations. The ultimate objective of the series is to provide a range of books which will explain in a readable and accessible way where we are now socially and culturally and how we got to where we are. This should enable people to be better informed, promote an interdisciplinary approach to cultural issues and encourage deeper thought about the issues, attitudes and institutions of popular culture.

Jeffrey Richards

To the memory of my mother, Joyce Chaplin,
and to my father, Albert, and my wife, Maureen

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General editor's foreword

It has long been recognised that the public house was and is one of the principal centres of working-class leisure. But until now the study of pub games and pub sports has been comparatively neglected. Patrick Chaplin's book is the first serious study of the sport of darts and the first systematic assessment of its social and cultural role in English society in the first half of the twentieth century.

The history of darts is a subject that has been mired in myth and misconception and reported on in largely anecdotal terms. With his extensive primary research in the national, local, sports and trade press and in the archives of the brewery companies, and with the judicious use of oral interviews, Chaplin establishes an accurate and authoritative account of the origins, growth and development of the sport. He convincingly argues that darts was deliberately encouraged by the brewers and publicans as a way of increasing the attraction of the pub as it came under threat from the competition of music halls, cinemas and dance halls. The development of darts was encouraged by sponsorship from newspapers with a large working-class readership, particularly the *News of the World.* The sport was also organised, codified and standardised, as Chaplin demonstrates, by the National Darts Association, established in 1925.

Chaplin rightly stresses, however, that darts was not something imposed on pubs from above; it was enthusiastically embraced by pub patrons, who valued it for the skill it entailed, the competition it engendered, the gambling it facilitated and the camaraderie it promoted. By the 1930s it had even become a 'craze', with the trade journal *The Brewer and Wine Merchant* reporting in 1939 that darts had become 'the most popular game in Great Britain'.

This book has undoubtedly been a labour of love, assiduously researched and evocatively written. It fills a major gap in the scholarly literature and will remain definitive for the foreseeable future.

Jeffrey Richards

Acknowledgements

This book represents the end of a very, very long journey, and no journey of any great length can possibly be completed without the help and guidance of friends, family and others along the way.

Of those who have supported and encouraged me I particularly thank Val Hoines, Claire Thrower, Lynda and Colin Barrell, Dave Bevan, Sue Chalmers and John Everard, Glen Huff, Chris Lewis and Stephen P. Nunn, who uttered all the right words of advice, comfort and/or encouragement at the right times (or proffered the correct alcoholic beverage) that regularly pulled me out of my vat of despair and sent me back to my research and moving on, albeit very slowly, towards completion of my Ph.D., from which this book has emerged. Regular bouts of tea and sympathy with my father, Albert Chaplin, also helped me remain focused throughout.

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To the staff of libraries and numerous record offices across the country I proffer my deepest thanks for their forbearance and diligence in

responding to my hundreds of enquiries by letter, e-mail and phone or in person. In particular my thanks go to all the staff at the Cambridge University Library, the British Library (Newspaper Library) at Colindale, the London Metropolitan Archive, the Museum of Childhood, Bethnal Green, and the Royal Free Hospital Archive, Hampstead.

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Also in 2005 Professor Nicholas Goddard of the ARU offered me the opportunity to share my knowledge of darts in the context of sports geography to a class of unsuspecting undergraduates, something which gave me more satisfaction than I ever imagined. Tanks too to Tony Wood, editor of *Darts World* magazine, and to Steve Williams, editor of the *Pub History Society Newsletter* and *Pub History – The Journal of the Pub History Society,* for publishing my occasional revelations on darts and pub culture.

Much of the information in this book would not have been recovered had it not been for the oral testimony of, among others, John Ross (President of the National Darts Association of Great Britain and organiser and promoter of darts), Ernest Deverell (a 1920s salesman for Thomas Salter & Co.), Frank Wolfe (editor of the 1940s darts newspaper *The Dart*), Amelia Leggatt (daughter of the founder of the Nodor darts manufacturing company) and Sally Hood (daughter of Jack Hood, darts and dartboard manufacturer). It was the late John Ross, a man who devoted his life to darts, who during an interview in 1988 told me simply that 'Darts needs someone like you.' Unbeknown to John those words set me off on my journey. (He died a few months later.) I also owe debts of gratitude to Ray Farleigh of the Brewery History Society and to author and pub games expert Arthur R. Taylor.

I thank all those at Manchester University Press for having the foresight and, dare I say it, the courage to publish the first academic work on the social history of darts. My thanks go to the commissioning editor, Anthony Mason, and his colleagues Emma Brennan and Deborah Smith, and particularly to the series editor, Professor Jeffrey Richards.

Finally, my wife Maureen has endured my research and its disruption of our lives for over a third of our married life. She has been a tower of strength (and more), especially at those times in the construction of the original thesis when nothing seemed to go right, which was quite often,

and then during the preparation of this book. How Maureen has coped with it and me is beyond my comprehension. How I have coped has been primarily down to her love, support and encouragement. Without her my Ph.D. would not have been completed and this book would never have seen the light of day.

P.C.

1

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 existence 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 spectators 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-1950s 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-1950s.

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 existence 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), multiplication (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 transferred 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 implications 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