

A Potted History

By Dan Lewis

1 Whilst reading about the modern game
I decided to set down my thoughts
All about this intriguing game we love
Its beauty and its warts

3 Created by Neville Chamberlain
In Eighteen Seventy-Five
George Pretyman was also there
To bring the game alive

5 A first year cadet was a "Snooker"
At "The Shop" for the Artillery
'The Woolwich training centre', called
"The Royal Military Academy"

7 Between Eighty-Two and Eighty-Five
The earliest rules were written
In clubs and messes throughout the Raj
The officers all were smitten

9 John Roberts Jnr, a Billiards professional
Coaching the 'Maharajah of Cooch Behar'
Was introduced to Sir Neville Chamberlain
And took the rules back to Blighty's shore

11 The first official Snooker championship
Was held in Nineteen Sixteen
It was called the "English Amateur"
The first there's ever been

13 Joe Davis won the first World Crown
At 'Thurstons Hall', it all started
And held it through to Forty-Six, when
From World Championships he departed

15 As master of both games he played
Retiring in Nineteen Sixty-Four
But in Fifty-Five he made the first
Official maximum Snooker score

2 It all began in India
Or so the legend says
In the officers mess at Jubbulpore
In the Empire's halcyon days

4 Some coloured balls were added to
The games they already played
Like 'Pyramid Billiards' and 'Life Pool'
The changes now were made

6 Controversy surrounded the beginning
With several candidates in the frame
Capt. Sheldrick and John Roberts, with
Tenuous links to the birth of the game

8 Fred Shorter a professional cueist, from
'Indian Hill Club' at Ootacamund
En route to Australia through Rangoon
Took the rules to the new game he found

10 From the busy club they called 'Ooty'
It spread both East and West
To gentlemen's clubs back in England
Snooker was proving to be the best

12 The game became more popular
As championships unfurled
Until in Nineteen Twenty-Seven
Came the Championship of the World

14 He beat Tom Dennis 20-11
Six pounds Ten shillings was his pot
Equivalent to £280 now
For a World Crown – not a lot

16 Joe and his younger brother Fred
Are still the only two
To win World crowns in both disciplines
Of Snooker and Billiards too

- 17 Now Fred was like the grandfather
Younger players all adore
Playing a Crucible semi-final
When he was Sixty-Four
- 18 The game was in the doldrums
For about a decade or more
With no sponsorship or interest
Disagreements and disputes galore
- 19 In Fifty-Two there was a split
Between players and governing body
With only two in the official comp'
Horace Lindrum beat Clark Maconachy
- 20 The players organised their own
"World Matchplay" competition
From Fifty-Two to Fifty-Seven
No 'Control Council' recognition
- 21 With no official World championships
Between Fifty-Eight and Sixty-Three
With a distinct lack of players
And no money to pay their fee
- 22 Challenge matches were the method used
From Sixty-Four to Sixty-Eight
Reverting to the Knock-out form
From Sixty-Nine, right up-to-date
- 23 Television in the late Sixties
Brought the game to everyone
With a growing army of lady fans
All tuned into BBC1
- 24 Watching the game from dawn till dusk
Past midnight and much longer
Plus younger players drawn to the game
Local leagues were getting stronger
- 25 From radio to Black & White
Then colour made it better
Listening to 'Whispering Ted Lowe'
The original commentator
- 26 With all his wit and knowledge
His comments were sharp and keen
He said, "for those with Black & White,
The Yellows behind the Green"
- 27 David Attenborough – the naturalist
As head of BBC sport
To promote the use of colour TV
In Sixty-Nine had a thought
- 28 'Pot Black' was born, Patsy Fagan won
For outside broadcasts – flew the flag
With Winifred Atwell at the piano playing
George Pottsford's 'Black & White Rag'
- 29 In Seventy-Two the 'Hurricane'
Won on his debut appearance
Joe Davis, John Spencer & Terry Griffiths
The other three to take their chance
- 30 Televised World Championships
Commenced in Nineteen Seventy-Three
Then ranking points in Seventy-Six
Were introduced, for seedings we see
- 31 With Embassy in Seventy-Six
A new dawn for Snooker is found
With 'Dracula' winning the trophy
Collecting £3,500
- 32 The following year to the Crucible
In Sheffield – it's permanent home
When tobacco sponsorship was banned
It became 888.com
- 33 The jinx began in Seventy-Eight
John Spencer beaten in round one
Thirteen – Eight by Perrie Mans
And so the seed was sown
- 34 With Spencer, Mans & Graham Myles
Both Taylors and 'Steady Eddie'
Ray & John plus Fred & Rex
For the Crucible were always ready

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|---|
| 35 | <p>In Seventy-Nine at his first attempt
Terry Griffiths won the pot
In Eighty, Cliff 'The Grinder' won
The only genuine overseas hot-shot</p> | 36 | <p>Steve Davis ruled the Eighties
With six wins in just nine years
But Alex got his second win
And with his daughter shed some tears</p> |
| 37 | <p>A Whirlwind then blew through the game
The 'Peoples Champion' of London town
He made six final appearances
But he never won the crown</p> | 38 | <p>Terry Griffiths versus 'The Grinder'
In Nineteen Eighty-Three
Ended at 3:51 in the morning
The latest match in Crucible history</p> |
| 39 | <p>With 'Joe Nineties' on in Eighty-Five
One finger waved in the air
The final Black in the final frame
He won his only title there</p> | 40 | <p>Denis beat Steve in 'That Final'
Passed midnight and on it went
Watched by 18.5 million viewers
The biggest TV sporting event</p> |
| 41 | <p>In Eighty-Six a Bradford man
Joe Johnson gave Steve the Blues
He sang with a band – "Made in Japan"
And wore his Crocodile shoes</p> | 42 | <p>In Eighty-Five to Blackpool Tower
The IBSF Amateurs came
With trumpet, fanfare and national flags
For the Centenary Championship games</p> |
| 43 | <p>A 15 year-old from Thailand was there
Wattanna Pu-Ob-Orm
He's now their 'Ambassador for Sport'
With his gentleness and charm</p> | 44 | <p>From Mauritius, Iceland, Australia
They came from near and far
Sri Lanka, Poland and Finland
New Zealand, South Africa</p> |
| 45 | <p>From Malta, Sweden, Hong Kong
Singapore and Pakistan
Cyprus and the British Isles
Including the Isle of Man</p> | 46 | <p>Now back to the Crucible theatre
We come to Hendry's decade
With seven crowns in just ten years
And hundreds of centuries made</p> |
| 47 | <p>Nineteen Ninety against the Hurricane
Steve James scored a 135 frame
The only '16 Red' total clearance
In a professional tournament game</p> | 48 | <p>In Nineteen Ninety-One the 'Toffee'
A previous winner of 'Pot Black'
John Parrott took his biggest prize
But he never won it back</p> |
| 49 | <p>Then came the phenomenal 'Rocket'
Moving the game into a new phase
Playing just as easily with either hand
Ronnie's the master of the Baize</p> | 50 | <p>There's only been one whitewash
At the Crucible it's true
John Parrott beating 'Steady Eddie'
Ten – nil, round one, Ninety-Two</p> |
| 51 | <p>Fergal O'Brien from the 'Emerald Isle'
Is unique in that he did score
A century in his very first frame
At the Crucible, in Nineteen Ninety-Four</p> | 52 | <p>Ken Doherty "The Darlin' of Dublin"
Is the only player to win, as yet
Both Junior & Amateur World titles
And in Ninety-Seven completed the set</p> |

- 53 From Wellingborough, 2002
Peter Ebdon was his name
He had the cue-ball cleaned at least
Ten times in every frame
- 54 In the 2007 World final
Between John Higgins and Mark Selby
One frame lasted 73 minutes
The longest in Crucible history
- 55 Now the very first 147 was made
By Joe Davis in Fifty-Five
With Ivory balls and heavy cloths
The maximum had arrived
- 56 Twas in the 'Lada Classic'
In the year of Eighty-Two
The 'Nugget' made the first maximum
On Television for us to view
- 57 And then in Nineteen Eighty-Three
Cliff Thorburn was his name
But this time at the Crucible
From a fluke he did the same
- 58 The total of maximums at Sheffield
Is Eight with Ronnie on Three
And @ 5 minutes & 20 seconds
He has the fastest in history
- 59 He's also the only player, to lose
With a 147 in a Crucible match;
Jimmy, Stephen & Mark Williams
With Ali Carter completing the batch
- 60 With Nine maximums by 'The Rocket'
Out of Sixty-Six to date
He's got the fastest Five of them
A genius on 'The Slate'
- 61 Now Willie was called 'Mr Maximum'
Or sometimes 'The Great WT'
He made more than 200 in practice
But never made one on TV
- 62 We've had a different champion
For Thirteen years on the trot
And still no first-time winner
Has successfully defended 'The Pot'
- 63 Now comes the threat from China
Numerous players on their way
With Marco, Ding and Liang Wenbo
They will surely have their day
- 64 For years David Vine ran the studio
With many pundits & some of the greats
Now Hazel Irvine plus 'The Deadly Duo'
(Steve & John) – With facts from Phil Yates
- 65 Alan Hughes who hails from Brighton
From comedian & singer to compere
In Eighty-Five Barry Hearn asked him
To introduce players, with panache & flair
- 66 He gave many a parent a nightmare
When introducing the players to us
Inventing most of their nicknames
But once forgot Alex's, Oh what a fuss!
- 67 We've just heard that two of the sponsors
Have pulled out of the game, such a waste
But Rodney's confident his 'War chest'
Will suffice, until new ones are in place
- 68 With all these names and places
This poem has gotten quite long
But let's hope this game keeps going
Staying both healthy and as strong
- 69 Now I must thank a number of authors
For the facts in these verses I've penned
Their arguments and deliberations
In their research: upon which I depend
- 70 Now if I've missed your favourite
Or overlooked a fact or two
Just put your pen to paper
The next verses are down to you.