

THE CUE COLLECTOR

by Andy Hunter

Tom Newman Cues

Most Newman cues are good playing cues although you can get one or two whippy ones. They are more like snooker cues, being made in the style of Tom Newman's own cue which was solid and played well.

Tom Newman was actually born "Tom Pratt" on 23rd March 1894 at Barton on Humber, Lincolnshire. However, he would soon move to London where his father had an hotel in Bow and was a useful player in his own right, being capable of breaks in excess of 200. Newman's first public game was at the age of 9 years and he was soon proclaimed the "Boy Champion of London", although at that time an organised Boys' Championship did not exist. By 1912 he was becoming a prominent player and seeing his potential, John Roberts took a three year contract as his manager. The opportunities afforded by Roberts brought Newman quickly into the limelight of professional billiards. Developing rapidly, Newman completed his first thousand break (1,024) on 6th May 1921 in a match against Birmingham professional Fred Lawrence at New Burroughes Hall, London.



Tom Newman: six times professional champion

He extended this with a record break of 1,274 which came in a heat of the Burroughes & Watts Tournament against Claude Falkiner in December 1922. The break which occupied three sessions, took a total of 85 minutes to compile. This is what *The Billiard Player* had to say about the conclusion: "on Saturday afternoon (the last day of the old year) the break was carried to its mammoth total of 1,274 in the most electrical atmosphere I can remember in a billiard hall. Every point of vantage in the New Burroughes Hall from which a sight of the table could be obtained was seized upon, and every stroke watched with an intensity that made one almost afraid to breathe. The end of the marvellous effort was a tragedy, and produced groans from the crowd that was hanging upon every movement of the player. In making a short losing hazard into the right top pocket across the head of the board, Newman just grazed his opponent's ball with his cue. Only a few of the onlookers had observed the incident, and there was general consternation when the voice of referee Eagles was heard declaiming "A foul stroke, sir." It was a tragic and inglorious ending to a new world's record, and some moments elapsed before the crowd realised what had happened. Then a storm of applause broke out which shook the building, after which the genial J. P. Mannoek; (manager of the hall) made a felicitous little speech congratulating Newman".

Newman extended his record break to 1,370 in a match against Willie Smith at the Burroughes Hall which concluded on 8th November 1924. His celebrations were somewhat tempered however, by having lost the 16,000 up match by 469 points. Smith also making a thousand break with 1,173.

In December 1930 Newman improved his personal high break further with 1,814 and followed this in March 1931 with a new personal record of 1,827 in a match against Walter Lindrum in Dundee.

Newman won the Professional Championship on six occasions during the 1920s although his achievements were overshadowed by Willie Smith, (generally regarded to be the best player at that time), refusing to enter amid almost continual disputes with the Governing Body.

There are seven different Tom Newman cues that are known to me. All of these are very similar in design incorporating most of the elements of the two badges illustrated, in various combinations.

1) The earliest example I have seen is the Tom Newman "record 1274" with a Burroughes and Watts badge. It has a plain ash shaft with an Indian rosewood butt and would have been in production for less than two years between 1923-1924.

2) Another which is difficult to find is the first of Tom Newman's "record break 1370" cues which is also identified with "Burroughes and Watts" name. This has a jet-black ebony butt and an ash shaft. The badge is impressed with Newman's facsimile signature.



Version 1: Tom Newman 1274 record



Plate for Versions 6 & 7

These two cues are the rarest in the Tom Newman range, both being valued around £250-£350. From this point, all the subsequent versions relate to Newman's break of 1,370

3) The third version is simply inscribed "Champion Cue" below an impressed signature and it again references his break of 1370. There is no mention of a maker on this badge. It has an ebony butt distinguished with a front mahogany or peduke splice and an ash or maple shaft. This is the most commonly found Newman cue and would be worth £120-£150.

4) Another version also carries reference to the Worlds Record 1370 break, but the inscription omits Newman's signature, substituting his name which is simply recorded as "Newman" in larger print, with "Burroughes & Watts" written underneath. It most commonly has an ebony butt with a front mahogany or peduke splice. (£150-£200)

5) The fifth example is the same as version 4, but with a signature instead of "Newman". It has the ebony butt with mahogany or peduke front splice. (£150-£200)

6 & 7) Additional versions can be found identical to (5) except that there is no maker's name. They can either have a plain ebony butt, or alternatively a peduke and mahogany front splice. Either of these versions would be worth between £150 - £200.

Apart from the two earliest examples, Newman cues listed in this article are generally quite common. I have heard of other cues which commemorate his 1827 and 1024 breaks, but as I have not seen them I cannot confirm that they actually exist. It should additionally be noted that the actual model of cue used for the Tom Newman 1274 break (version 1) can also be found with a range of different badges attached to it, having been manufactured and supplied by Peradon & Co to various retailers for this purpose. With the possible exception of version 2—which may have been made by Burroughes and Watts—all of these cues are likely to have been manufactured by Peradon & Co.

NEWS FROM THE SOUTH

Burgess Record in Portsmouth

Dave Burgess was hardly a surprise winner of the recently held annual Portsmouth billiards championship, he had after all won the title for the previous eight years. It was the manner of his victory and the high breaks that caught the eye. In his semi against Steve Kearns, Dave made a break of 193, a record for the event, at his second visit to the table and further runs of 76, 70, 67 and 51 ensured a 500-103 victory.

In the final against local stalwart Stan Pitts, honours were even at the halfway stage with no significant contributions from either player when Dave embarked on a break of 259, breaking the record for a second time that day and leaving him just 18 points short of his eventual victory target which was secured at his next visit to guarantee a ninth successive title by the margin of 600-292. What makes this achievement even more noteworthy is that business commitments as an international sales director mean that Dave is abroad on an almost weekly basis and therefore hardly ever has the time to practice let alone get any competitive matchplay!

OBITUARY ... BILL WATSON

N. W. (Bill) Watson died at his home in Torkey, Lincs; on 4th April after a long illness. He was 69. Bill was six times Lincolnshire Billiards Champion and a team-mate of Ray Edmunds and Bill Turner in the highly successful Lincolnshire team. Many people will remember him as a regular player in the mini-prix series during the '70s and '80s.