

Anthony E. Pratt - Inventor of Cluedo

PRATT WAS BORN AT 13 BRIGHTON ROAD, BALSALL HEATH, BIRMINGHAM. HE RECEIVED HIS SECONDARY EDUCATION AT ST. PHILIP'S SCHOOL IN EDGBASTON. HIS FAVOURITE SUBJECT WAS CHEMISTRY, BUT HE SUFFERED FROM POOR EYESIGHT, WHICH AFFECTED HIS EDUCATION. PRATT WAS A GIFTED MUSICIAN AND A PROFICIENT PIANIST FROM AN EARLY AGE. WHEN HE LEFT SCHOOL AT 15, HE WANTED TO PURSUE A CAREER IN CHEMISTRY AND WAS APPRENTICED TO A LOCAL CHEMICAL MANUFACTURER. BUT WITH NO FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS IN CHEMISTRY AND A GROWING INTEREST IN MUSIC, HE WENT ON TO PURSUE A MUSICAL CAREER.



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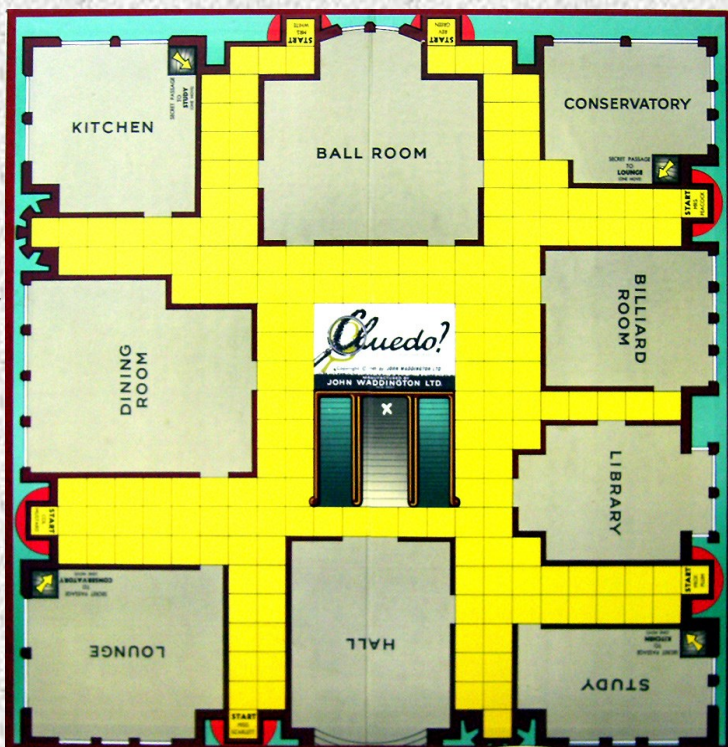
DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR, PRATT WORKED IN AN ENGINEERING FACTORY IN BIRMINGHAM THAT MANUFACTURED COMPONENTS FOR TANKS. WORKING ON A DRILLING MACHINE, HE FOUND THE WORK TEDIOUS, BUT IT GAVE HIM TIME TO THINK, INCLUDING ABOUT THE IDEAS BEHIND CLUEDO.

IT WAS DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR THAT PRATT HAD THE IDEA FOR A MURDER MYSTERY BOARD GAME. THE IDEA FOR CLUEDO CAME FROM HIS DAYS SPENT PLAYING

MUSICAL CONCERTS IN COUNTRY HOTELS WHERE PART OF THE EVENING'S ENTERTAINMENT WOULD HAVE BEEN MURDER MYSTERY GAMES. THESE WOULD INVOLVE BOTH ACTORS AND HOTEL GUESTS PLAYING THE CHARACTERS IN A PLOT WHICH INVOLVED THE MURDER OF ONE OR MORE OF THE GUESTS.

THE SETTING WAS A COUNTRY HOUSE WITH ITS MANY SPRAWLING ROOMS, WITH GUESTS GATHERED FOR AN EVENING'S DINING AND SOCIALISING, BUT A BODY WAS FOUND MURDERED AND ALL THE GUESTS FELL UNDER SUSPICION. BY PUTTING CLUES TOGETHER, THE HOTEL GUESTS MUST SOLVE THE MYSTERY. THESE WERE VERY POPULAR GAMES AT THE TIME, AND GIVEN THIS ALONG WITH PRATT'S LOVE OF DETECTIVE FICTION INCLUDING THAT OF HIS FAVOURITES RAYMOND CHANDLER AND AGATHA CHRISTIE, THE SPARK FOR CLUEDO WAS CREATED.

AT THE TIME BOOKS LIKE *AND THEN THERE WERE NONE* AND *THE BODY IN THE LIBRARY* WERE ALSO ENORMOUSLY POPULAR. HENCE, IN 1943, ANTHONY AND HIS WIFE ELVA (1913-1990) BEGAN DESIGNING A MURDER MYSTERY BOARD GAME. THE ORIGINAL GAME WAS CALLED "MURDER!", WITH THE ARTWORK FOR THE BOARD ITSELF DESIGNED BY ELVA. IN FEBRUARY 1945, PRATT DEMONSTRATED THE GAME TO WATSON, THE MANAGING DIRECTOR OF WADDINGTONS WHO IMMEDIATELY SAW THE WINNING FORMULA OF THE GAME AND, AFTER A FEW MINOR MODIFICATIONS, DECIDED TO GO AHEAD AND MANUFACTURE IT. IT WAS WADDINGTONS WHO RENAMED THE GAME CLUEDO (A COMBINATION OF "CLUE" AND "LUDO", A LATIN WORD MEANING "I PLAY").



BUT MATERIAL SHORTAGES IN POST-WAR BRITAIN MEANT THE GAME DID NOT GO INTO PRODUCTION UNTIL 1949. PRATT WAS GRANTED PATENT GB586817 'IMPROVEMENTS IN BOARD GAMES' ON 1 APRIL 1947



Balsall Heath
Local History Society

Legends of Balsall Heath