



▲ The design and technology of the dart has changed dramatically over the last century, as shown by this small selection from the collection of darts historian Patrick Chaplin.

(Note all are shown at their actual size.)

At the top is an undated example of a **Hasnon dart**, as imported from France between the 1880s and the 1950s, and sold loose in

bins (at three for sixpence in the late 1940s). Hasnon darts had birchwood shafts, turkey feather flights glued into slots, steel points and, to add weight (a vital component of any dart) a band of lead pressed into the shaft.

It is possible that the popular word for darts – ‘arrows’ – derives from these darts, which the French called *fléchettes*, or little arrows.

In the centre is a 1930s **brass and cane dart** of the sort publicans used to give away but which so annoyed Frank Lowy. It has a brass barrel and a cane shaft with slits to hold the paper flight. A sliding steel clip helped tighten the cane to keep the flight from falling out.

Lowy’s response, launched in 1938, was the **Silver Comet** (*bottom*), the world’s first all metal

dart with its chrome-plated brass barrel, aluminium shaft, vulcanised fibre flights and its all important screw cap to hold the flight in place.

Slender and light (too light for some tastes, which is why Lowy soon introduced different weights), the Silver Comet retailed for a whopping 2s 6d for a set of three, but was deliberately aimed at the burgeoning middle class market.



▲ One of the leading professionals of his day, Jim Pike set up his own company in 1945. This typical **Jim Pike dart** (*top*) has a brass barrel, a white plastic adaptor to hold the cane shaft, and dyed turkey feather flights. Although hardly cutting edge, the design proved popular enough for it to remain virtually unchanged until the Hertfordshire-based company closed in 2000.

Also in Hertfordshire, a St Albans engineering company called C Giles & Co. produced brass and feather flighted darts under the brand name **Kwiz** (*centre*) from the 1950s until the 1970s.

But all these companies were forced to take stock when a new generation of darts appeared in the 1970s, fitted with polyester flights (which are far more durable and

aerodynamic than paper or feathers and can be flat-packed in a case), and, most crucially of all, barrels made from tungsten alloy.

Because this alloy is twice as dense as brass, tungsten darts are now so slender that a skilled player can ‘stack’ three of them in a line within either a double or a treble ring (that is, within a depth of just 8mm).

Shown here (*bottom*) is a modern, state-of-the-art **Savage Steeltip**, with 80% tungsten, made by **Harrows**, another Hertfordshire company, founded in 1973 and now based in Hoddesdon. Others in their range go up to 97% tungsten, with the typical weight ranging from 20–30gms, and prices ranging from £15 up to £35 for a set of three.