

History of the Skip

Nowadays we take skips for granted. If we want to undertake a garden project or house renovation, ordering a skip is a nice easy way to remove the waste produced. However they haven't always been in existence. Who invented the skip and when did they first appear in the UK?

The Pagefield System

The first sign of a container resembling a skip as it is used today was in the early 1920's in Southport. Household waste would be disposed of using horse drawn refuse carts however the distance between people's houses and the dump was starting to become a real problem (I suspect this was because having your house near to the rubbish dump wasn't very popular!). In 1922 Edwin Walker, an employee of Pagefield who were a lorry manufacturers company, met with Southports borough engineer and The Pagefield System was born. It used 300 cubic ft horse drawn containers which, once full, could be winched up onto a Pagefield lorry and taken to the nearest dump.

This system was further developed in 1926 by a company called S&D (founded by Harry Shelvoke & James Dewry) when they launched 'The Freighter' – a small wheeled petrol engine truck they had invented. Further progressions followed including sideways mounting skips for the Marylebone area of London in 1926.

1930's and 1940's

Developments in the US throughout the 1930's and 40s came from George Dempster and his brothers (Dempster Brothers Inc) with the invention of the Dempster Dumper and similar vehicles from a company called Brooks Equipment and Mfg.Co. founded by Ernest and Wallace Brooks. In 1940 Brooks launched the revolutionary 'Load Lugger' which featured the hydraulic lifting arms we still recognise on skip lorries today.

Post World War 11

With the aftermath of World War 11 and the economy struggling, it was proving costly and impractical for tipper drivers to wait at sites whilst they were loaded. Construction rubble was being left to build up creating a hazardous environment both to builders and the public. Furthermore there was an increase in property development and DIY over the years with more and more people wanting to make improvements to their home.

In the 1960's the first metal skips were imported from Germany by a London based company called George Cross & Co. They allowed construction waste to be contained safely and were used by members of the public for domestic use too. Unlike today where Skip Companies can provide a range of different size skips, they originally came in just one size which was around 5-6 cubic yards. They would cost £5 and 3 shillings per day hire and then a further 7 shillings for the waste to go to the landfill site. This was actually a lot of money

back in those days! In the 1970's The Highways Act stated that all skips should be yellow (which they always had been) so they were more visible at night. Luckily, times have changed since then and other colours can be used with the provision of lights for skips that are on the road. Phew! – Ours are red here at Haulaway!

Where does the word 'skip' come from?

There are two main origins of the word 'skip'.

Beekeeping

The first goes back to the ancient art of beekeeping. Before the modern box structure that is used nowadays people would often use an inverted basket or sometimes a hollow log to keep bees in. The straw or wicker basket was known as a 'skep'. The Old English word 'sceppe' means basket.

Coal Mine Skips

In the olden days coal was dug and measured in 'sleps' which was also the name for the baskets measuring the coal. As times progressed rail tracks were invented and baskets were replaced by containers that were made from wood and steel. They were still called 'sleps' but overtime this morphed into 'skip' (possibly from mispronunciation?) which is still used to describe coal mine carts today.



So there you have it! A brief history about how the skips we see today came about. To order your 'slep' please visit www.haulaway.co.uk 😊