



Teacher/ older student information sheet

History of waste



The earliest recorded landfill was in the Cretan Capital, Knossos in 3000BC. The waste was put into large pits and covered with earth.



London in 1354 employed people called "Rakers" who once a week would rake the waste off the streets and load it into carts. By 1407, it was ruled that the household waste was to remain in people's property until the rakers could remove the waste. It was then either sold as compost or dumped in the Essex's marshes.



In 1408, Henry IV's removal order instructed that waste be removed or else forfeits were to be paid.



In 1515, court records show that Shakespeare's father was fined for 'depositing filth in a public street'



By the early 1800's people were making a living from going through people's waste; "Toshers" these were people who worked the sewers looking for coins, metal, rope and sometimes they would come across jewellery. This was a dangerous but lucrative way to make a living.



Some people known as "Mud-larks" scavenged the riverbanks looking for discarded materials but they made a very poor living from doing this.



Also, there were "Dustmen" who collected ash from the coal fires. The dust was taken to a dust yard where men, women and children worked through the waste pile sieving the coarse section of dust. The dust was then used as a soil conditioner and brick making.

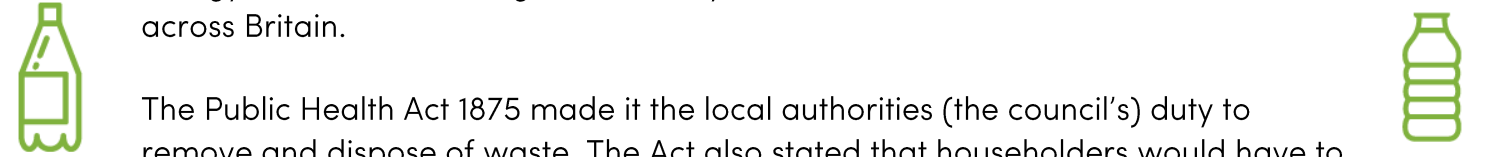


The first prototype of the incineration plants was designed and constructed in Nottingham in 1874, it was given the name of "destructor" with the aim to generate





energy from waste. During the next 30 years a further 250 destructors were built across Britain.



The Public Health Act 1875 made it the local authorities (the council's) duty to remove and dispose of waste. The Act also stated that householders would have to keep their waste in a moveable container. This was the beginning of the dustbin, which would later become a wheeled bin, which the residents' local council would collect once a week.



By the late 1800's all household waste was collected in moveable containers and sorted by hand, usually by women or girls. A large proportion of the waste was re-used, for example, glass and the metals were returned to merchants.

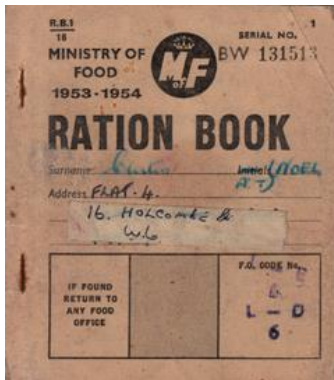
The British Paper Company was established in 1890 to make paper and board from recycled materials. The waste paper was obtained from the Salvation Army and the Rag-And-Bone men.



In the 1930's people burned paper and coal to heat their homes and for hot water, this led to very little paper waste being thrown out into the bins. There were also a small percentage of textiles, glass and metals in their bins due to recovery and re-use schemes.



World War II started in 1939 and continued into 1945. During these years, there would have been very little waste, fuel and food was rationed and there was a rise in reclamation and recycling.



Local Councils made efforts to legislate against the dumping of waste. Throughout the country, tips up to a mile long were burning continuously.





After World War II, landfill was the preferred method to dispose of the waste with little thought of the environmental impact and economics were against incineration.



The post war period noted the boost in the salvage industry due to the demand in the war years for materials and also increasing the public's awareness of the environment.



By the 1960's private contractors had started to appear in the waste industry and began to take over work that had previously been considered as a public works activity.



In 1974 increased concern over waste, led to the Control of Pollution Act 1974 which aims to control waste disposal. The first recycling bottle banks appear in 1977.



The 1980's saw an increase in public concern over waste disposal especially hazardous waste. The Commons Environment Committee inquiry 1989, chaired by Sir Hugh Rossi, recommended that waste regulation was passed from local authorities to a central body.



In the 1990's The Duty of Care was introduced. This meant that anyone who imports, produces, keeps, carries, treats or disposes of controlled waste must take responsibility. It became the producer's responsibility to recover and recycle their packaging.



In 2000 the waste strategy for England and Wales was finalised and published, setting new recycling and composting targets for the local authorities with strict deadlines:

- 25% by 2005
- 30% by 2010
- 33% by 2015
- 50% by 2020





The present day: Local and Central government drive forward the message of recycling and waste minimisation. Doorstep recycling services are rolled out in local authorities, with the aim to reduce the amount of waste being sent to landfill.

