



The origin of the word 'Skip'

BY KATY ATTWOOD

We all work in the skip industry but how many of us have ever stopped to wonder where the word 'skip' comes from? It has been a question plaguing us at The Skip for some time so after a good deal of thorough research from resident etymologist, Katy Attwood, we have tracked down the source of the term.

To get to the bottom of the mystery, we must first turn to the ancient art of bee-keeping. Before wooden framed hives came into use, European and British beekeepers either used inverted straw or wicker baskets or hollow logs to house their honeybee colonies. The straw "skep" proved the most portable and adaptable to beekeepers' improving techniques, slowly the log and then the wicker skep went out of use. In continental Europe, where traditional agricultural systems survived until after the second world war, the straw skep retained some popularity, but in Britain where



land use lost its traditional forms in the 18th century, the skep came to be seen as part of the old order and by the 19th century was no longer regarded as a suitable permanent home for the honeybee colony.

The word 'skep' then, once a common name for any type of basket is nowadays only used in relation to this traditional artform. But before it disappeared from the common tongue, it was adopted by the cotton mill workers of Lancashire who referred to the huge wheeled baskets they placed their woven cotton into as 'sleps'. In addition, a method of drying the material in the cloth-method process was called 'wuzzing'. Damp cloth was placed into a 'wuzzing skep' – a basket attached to a pole - and whirled around making a wuzzing noise. Centrifugal force forced the water out of the cloth.

From the cotton mills then to the coal mines. At the beginning of the industrial revolution, when technology was still in its rudimentary stages, coal was dug and measured in terms of

'sleps'. In the mining industry a skep was a basket with an arched handle used as a measure



of coal. We know that in Denmark a skep held 17.4 litres, so presumably an English skep would have been around the same. As industrial innovation progressed, railway lines were built into the mines, the sleps were once again wheeled, and coal hauled out of the mines more efficiently. It soon became evident that straw was not the most robust material for shifting hunks of coal and manufacturers developed steel versions of sleps. Over the years skep became skip and the containers are still referred to as such in modern coal mines. When the bins we use came over from Germany in the early sixties, the shape of them resembled the coal sleps so it was a logical step to name them thus.

Skip Stuck in Time Vortex

BY CHARLOTTE ROBINSON

When Sheila Tindell hired a builder's skip in Leeds for £90, she thought she had found herself a bargain.

Little did she realise that 6 months on, her bargain would still be gracing her garden with its beautiful presence. Despite making numerous phone calls to Betta Skips to come and collect it, the skip appears to be stuck in a time vortex – at least that is the only rational explanation.

Miss Tindell decided to hire the skip last July as she wanted to clear the garden to make way for a patio. She kept the skip for a fortnight and called the owner of the skip hire company. Nobody came to pick it up so she called again after another fortnight. In fact she called another 15 times but to no avail.

In fact not only did she want it picking up, she also wanted an exchange as there is more work to be done. Miss Tindell has had to cancel all deliveries of patio materials to her home until the skip is shifted.

The skip has become an eyesore and the neighbours are unhappy. It even blocks one neighbour from getting to his rubbish bins. Mr Matthews has even had to build a ramp over the skip to get his motorbike past.

"There are plants and weeds growing out of it", Miss Tindell added. "I am really annoyed about it. The advert says the firm is fast and reliable. It has been a complete nightmare, a waste of money on phone calls and I am at a standstill with the garden."

The owner of Betta Skips says he wants to pick up the skip but doesn't have a contact number for her.