



Dr Shave's Book of Shaving
History of Shaving

— The expert guide to the world of shaving —

Introduction

Shaving dates back to prehistoric times, then seashell and flint stones were used as razors, ouch!

Thankfully with the advent of the industrial revolution and some smart thinkers we have progressed to modern day cartridge, double edge and single edge safety razors and a huge array of creams and soaps to choose from.

Today men expect a close, bloodless, comfortable shave every time and modern day shaving tools will guarantee that providing your technique is right.

History of Shaving

Shaving can be traced back to prehistoric times when early man first started to pull hairs from his face. In the following centuries various tools were employed to scrape hair from the faces and bodies of both men and women. It wasn't until the 19th century, with the industrial revolution, that the art of shaving became possible.

Early Days

Evidence of shaving in prehistoric times comes from cave paintings which show that sea shells were used as tweezers to pluck the facial hairs. Flint razors have been found from as early as 30,000 BC.

It is thought that shaving was done for many reasons:

- hygiene
- to avoid food becoming caught up in the beard

- minimise breeding grounds for lice and other parasites
- to avoid the beard being used as a hand hold in combat
- vanity since the beard was associated with old age and death.

Early Tools and Creams

Archaeological evidence shows that the next step was due to the metallurgical developments of the Bronze Age. Copper razors were discovered in India and Egypt dating back to 3,000 BC. Various other tools, creams and potions were used over the next millennia and in 500 BC the first barber shops began to appear in Rome, where the tonsors (barbers) used iron razors.

Women had to resort to using lamps to singe off their leg hairs as well as razors, creams, tweezers and even pumice stones.

Early Fashions

Before AD 100, the Greeks and Romans continued to shave their faces and heads, probably as a hygienic measure to minimise infestations of lice and other parasites.

In the military, shaving the head and face had the additional benefit of preventing the enemy from using hair as a hand hold.



Around AD 100, when the Emperor Hadrian rose to power, it became fashionable for men to wear beards.

AD 476-1270 – during this time, the trend was for ladies to painfully remove all hair from the body including eyebrows, eyelashes, temples and neck in order to look chic.

The Twelfth Century saw radical changes to the way many societies dressed and groomed. At the start of the century nearly all French men, for example, wore full beards, but by 1400 most were clean-shaven.

In the mid to late 1700s - men and women began to remove all hair from their foreheads in order to wear artificial press-on mouse skin eyebrows.

Early Literature and Safety Razor Evolution

It is believed the honour of devising the first safety razor goes to Jean Jacques Perret (1730-1784) of Paris,



France. Perret was a master cutler and famed author of *Pogonotomie, au L'Art D'Apprendre à se Raser Sol-Même* (*Pogonotomie, or The Art of Shaving Oneself*) in 1769 and *L'Art du Coutelier* (*The Art of the Cutler*) in 1771. The original Dr. Shave!

Perret described a device he called a 'rasoir à robot' – a plane for the beard, which he had invented in 1762. It was inspired by a carpenter's plane, and consisted of a wooden sleeve that enclosed the blade of an ordinary folding

straight razor, allowing only a small portion of the edge to protrude. Perret never patented his invention.

Early Safety Razor Improvements and Shaving Soaps

In Sheffield, England in the 18th and 19th century, they produced steel straight razors. Their main drawback was that they became dull quickly, and so had to be honed and stropped frequently to maintain a sharp edge.

In 1847 a significant invention was made by Englishman, William Henson. Henson created the first 'hoe type' razor with the blade perpendicular to the handle, just like a garden tool - similar to what we're familiar with today.

This design made it easier to shave oneself, reducing the need for a barber and became an overnight success.

The earliest known soap recipe was found in the Egyptian Ebers Papyrus, a medical document from about 1500 BC,



which describes combining animal and vegetable oils with alkaline salts to form a soap-like material.

Soap making first became a commercial activity in the 19th century after a French chemist Michel Chevreul discovered the chemical nature of and relationship between fats, glycerin and fatty acids. Further advances during the industrial revolution saw soap transformed from an expensive luxury to an everyday necessity by 1850.

Shaving soaps and aftershave lotions made from cherry laurel water also appeared in the late 1800s.

The first patent for a safety razor was filed by the Kampfe brothers in the US in the 1880s. This featured a wire skin guard along one side of the razor's edge. Only one side of the actual blade was used and because it was made of forged steel it had to be removed frequently for sharpening.

Despite this the Kampfe razor was the best safety razor on the market at the time and it would take the intervention of the most famous name in shaving to change everything

Time for Gillette

In 1903, Mr King Camp Gillette, together with William Nickerson launched a new concept in shaving - the disposable razor blade. Together with a modified form of safety razor designed to allow the easy replacement of the worn blade, this new innovation revolutionised the shaving market.

Gillette became an overnight success producing 90,000 razors and progressing

to 2.5 million blades in the second year of trading. Continual improvements have ensured that the company he founded remains the leading supplier of shaving goods in the world today.

20th Century

In 1910 an American, Willis G Hockey, received a patent for the first mechanical shaver. The 'wind up safety razor' incorporated a pull cord to drive a flywheel that operated for a short period of time before it needed to be wound up again.

In 1915 the Wilkinson Sword Company, a manufacturer of razor blades for men, launched a campaign to encourage women to shave their armpits. This was based on the premise that it was both unhygienic and unfeminine to keep underarm hair.

Another American in 1921, Lt. Col. Jacob Schick invented a new razor called the 'magazine repeating razor', which had replacement razor blades stored inside its handle. Blades were purchased in clips,

which were inserted easily into the razor. Schick also began to develop his 'injector razor', which would become an extremely popular shaver in the years to come.

In 1927 the same Colonel invented the World's first electric dry shaver, with oscillating blades. This became available to the public in 1929 but wasn't met with much enthusiasm. He had to wait another two years until an electric motor had been developed that was small enough to fit into a hand-held device, yet powerful enough to cut through a beard.

In 1931, he sold his first electric razor in New York for \$25 and managed to sell another 3,000 that year. Schick's gadget caught the public's imagination and by 1937, 1.5 million were in use. It was not long before other manufacturers, including Gillette and Remington, began to produce their own electric razors.

Another important inventor was Prof. Alexandre Horowitz, from Philips Laboratories in Holland, who invented the very successful revolving electric razor.

The Philips Company, of Philishave fame, produced electric razors in the years 1939 – 2006 under the Philishave brand and still produces them today under the name of Philips.



Modern Day

Gillette manufactured carbon steel blades up until the 1960s but in 1965, the British Wilkinson Sword Company introduced stainless steel blades that, with no tendency to rust, could be used until blunt.

Wilkinson Sword soon captured the British and European markets and Gillette were forced to switch to stainless steel to compete.

Modern carbon steel blades are still available and should not rust if rinsed in alcohol after use - top tip!

1974 - the first completely disposable razor was introduced from Bic.

Gillette's response was the Good News disposable razor which was launched on the US market in 1976.

Now there are numerous disposable razors available, most of them designed with the emphasis on economy and not shaving performance.



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