

Compare a 1930s and a 21st-century bin.



Facts and Figures

- The largest percentage of waste in the 1930's bin was from ash and dust. In the 1930s most people had coal fires and the ashes were thrown into the bin. (Mention that it was fortunate that the bins were metal and not plastic.) In the 1930's people were less aware of smoke pollution, so they burnt any waste that was combustible. They also composted much of their food waste, as it was common to have an allotment. Rag and bone men, scrap metal merchants and the pig-man collected waste materials from people's homes in an early form of recycling.
- Plastic had not been invented in the 1930s, but today we use and throw away a huge range of plastic items—toys, cameras, mobile phones, food trays, bags and bottles.
- In the 1930's food was produced locally, now we transport items for many miles and wrap them in several layers of protective packaging. Most of the waste in a 21st-century bin is packaging.
- The 21st-century bin contains 20% food and garden waste, the 1930's bin contains only 13% food waste. This is possibly due to less people composting and the fact that food is more plentiful and cheaper today, making us more wasteful.