

## The Fascinating History of Hair Removal

We've become a well-groomed society but that wasn't always so. Learn about the role that hair removal has played in the grooming history and culture of civilization as it ranged from the political to the sartorial.

We traditionally think of a caveman as the "Hairy Ape" and we've been conditioned to associate excessive body hair with primitive people and tribal behaviour. (Sounds just like a description of my Husband). The timeline for hair removal stretches from prehistory to the hi-tech present and Homo Sapiens's reasons for being shorn, razored, waxed, tweezed, electrolyzed, lasered, and in any manner depilated, are as varied and unique as we are. The reasons for hair removal have ranged from the practical to the vainglorious and over the years an entire industry with many related businesses has grown out of our seemingly innocuous desire to be relatively smooth-skinned and on many parts of our bodies hair-free. Hair is a renewable resource, at least in our younger years, and left unattended will give us the opportunity to emulate Howard Hughes in all his hirsute glory, though not with the financial wherewithal that gave Mr. Hughes the latitude to remain totally unshaven to the bitter end. So follow along the follicle-strewn path of sartorial evolution and see the unique and interesting twists and turns in our journey of discovery.

At **Amber Health, Beauty and Sports Injury Clinic** we perform many forms of Hair Removal and on both Male and Female Clients on all parts of the anatomy. But ..... read on.

### First The Practical.....

Perhaps it was a Neanderthal tired of Mammoth scraps getting caught in his beard. It's believed that this was one of the first motivations for early shaving - if you call scraping the coarse matted hair off with a semi-sharp stone and most likely taking some of the skin beneath it "shaving." Eluding the clutches of the aforementioned Mammoth or his Sabre Toothed nemesis, as well as other warring clansmen, was no doubt easier without having long, rope like hair and/or a dangling beard to offer a handhold or claw hold, as the case might be. And although the grooming practice of picking out the lice and other vermin, remaining as a holdover from our simian ancestors, offered some bonding pleasure, most likely someone discovered that the irritating pests didn't plague the less hairy inhabitants of the cave as much. Finally, it was certainly noticed that the more hairy tribesmen, being elder, died sooner. Thus an association of death with excess hair was formed in brains that were still evolving. This could also explain today's young stylist's fascination with the totally shaven head as a fashion statement; apparently this is no longer strictly the territory of military and correctional facility grooming.

The idea of singeing facial hair came into vogue early on; twigs and branches were used for this purpose, although significant stubble would remain, unless the recipient was simultaneously being branded. Crude Tweezer-like implements have been found in archaeological digs of early man sites; this technique proved unpopular even in those difficult times. Our aversion to pain for appearance's sake was apparent even then. The functionality and regimental visual conformity achieved by shaving or trimming facial hair was important to early Egyptians, Greeks, and other emerging cultures as they grew by massing armies and conquering their neighbours. Certainly, as the Emperor or King did, so the populace would follow, and rulers then and after have been noticeably clean-shaven.

### Then the Fashionable.....

The development of metallurgy which led to a quality shaving blade fostered both men and women shaving with some degree of comfort and safety; in fact the 1800's, with that period's Victorian emphasis on gentlemanly grooming, is considered the "Golden Age" of shaving. It was the thin and practical disposable razor, invented by the young King Camp Gillette, that brought men's shaving into the Industrial Age and many of these "Safety Razors" went off to war with the troops, thus ensuring the timeless smooth-shaven warrior. The Gillette razor's popularity after the war introduced relatively risk-free cosmetic shaving to the soldier's sweethearts and wives as well. Later the invention of the electric razor, heralded the dawn of technological hair removal, at least on a temporary basis. Although plucking and tweezing had offered more lasting depilation, it would be science that would create the possibility of [permanent hair removal](#).

In the latter part of the smooth-shaven (at least for men) 1800's, an enterprising ophthalmologist discovered he could stop the growth of ingrown eyebrows by introducing electricity into the follicle before removing the hair. This was the birth of electrolysis and this method of introducing a fine probe to the hair follicle to abate its ability to regrow using electricity of different types remains a popular depilatory method to this day. There are electrologists operating in nearly every city of any size and this industry continues to flourish.

Not to be outdone, 20th century technology spawned a similar grooming aid when a laser scientist accidentally exposed his arm to a laser beam and, after determining he was uninjured, noted that the hair didn't grow back in the area the light had affected. Laser research and refinements have enabled this technology to be used for many medical procedures in addition to cosmetic hair removal and medical science is continually finding new uses for laser technology.

While depilatory creams and lotions abound, these mechanical and technological methods are still used the most often. As mankind advances into further into space, it'll be interesting to see how galactic travellers will handle hair removal; perhaps their whiskers will just seem to "float away."

By [John Brooks](#) Published: 10/2/2007