

**1792**

Scottish engineer and inventor William Murdoch discovers a way to make gas from coal, which he uses to light his home in Cornwall.



**c.1805**

Frederick Winsor has a vision for the centralised production of gas, which could be piped to multiple homes and businesses. His vision would come to fruition, with every town and city in the UK eventually being supplied by its own gasworks.



**1807**

Some of the first public gas lights in Britain are installed in London's Pall Mall, causing much excitement and wonder.



**1859**

Gas lighting is fitted in the Houses of Parliament, helping to increase its popularity in middle class homes.

**c.1850**

The first gas space heaters are introduced, imitating coal fires by heating asbestos to warm a room.

**1868**

Benjamin Maugham invents the Geysier. Although this amazing device provides instant hot water, it is extremely dangerous, releasing fumes which could be lethal without an open door or window.

**Did you know..?**  
To test whether a customer's cooker was working properly, gas companies would send someone out to bake a cake in it. If the sponge didn't rise, the cooker was fixed or replaced.

**1914**

The First World War begins. The gas industry employs thousands of women in jobs that had previously only been open to men, although they are paid less. Their vital roles strengthen the calls for equality and, at the end of the War, (some) women are finally granted the Vote.



**1889**

The Gas Workers' Union - the first union for non-skilled workers - is founded. Its first major achievement is to reduce working hours to an eight-hour day.

**1889**

Gas companies begin to employ women, known as 'Lady Demons', to give cooking demonstrations at exhibitions and in gas company showrooms. Their role becomes pivotal in marketing gas appliances to homeowners, and eventually contributes to social development including provision of school meals, better housing, and family allowance payments being made directly to women.

**1880**

Austrian chemist Carl Auer von Welsbach invents the incandescent gas mantle. This revolutionises gas lighting, producing a much brighter light than a naked flame.

**Did you know..?**  
By-products from the gas-making process were used to make all sorts of things such as paint, medicines, disinfectants, clothes – even flavourings!



**1870**

T.S. Lacey invents the pre-payment gas meter, making lighting, heating and cooking with gas more affordable and leading to a significant rise in its use in British homes.

**1870**

London opens the largest gasworks in the world at Beckton, supplying gas to most of London north of the Thames.

**c.1870**

The gas industry becomes one of the first to provide paid holidays, sick pay and pensions to its workers.

**Did you know..?**  
During World War I, women workers started playing in competitive football teams, which were often named after the factories and other places they worked in. They drew huge crowds and raised money from ticket sales for charities helping wounded soldiers.



**1920s**

In the face of increasing competition from electricity as the main source of power in the home, the gas industry begins manufacturing a variety of new domestic appliances to encourage consumers to stay with gas. Alongside the more conventional lights, gas fires and cookers are gas washing machines, gas fridges, gas irons, even gas hairdryers!

**c.1930**

The clockwork controller is invented. Streetlights can now be lighted automatically, marking an end to the long tradition of lamplighters who had walked the streets lighting the lamps at dusk and extinguishing them at dawn.



**1938**

The gas-powered radio is invented by Henry Milnes, but its development is interrupted by the start of the Second World War in 1939 and, despite the potential, never really takes off.

**1939**

World War II begins. Once again, the gas industry employs thousands of women in jobs that had previously only been open to men, although they are paid less. The equal pay act is finally passed in 1970.



**c.1940**

During World Wars I and II, fuel is short and reserved mainly for military purposes. Many cars, buses and lorries are adapted to run on gas – especially during World War II. In the UK this mainly involves storing the gas in a large 'bag' strapped to the top of the vehicle.

**Present day**

Gas, along with other energy sources like wind, solar and nuclear energy is still a vital source of power for the UK and provides essential back-up to renewable energies when the sun is not shining and it's not windy. Around a quarter of the country's electricity is generated by gas-fired power stations, and 80% of its 25 million homes use gas for heating and cooking.



**2017**

21 April marks the first full day in the UK when power is generated without the use of coal.

**Did you know..?**  
Modern natural gas is not poisonous but gas leaks are still dangerous as they can cause explosions – because the gas is colourless and odourless, a harmless gas called mercaptan is added to make it smell so you know when you've left the gas on. Some people say it smells like rotten eggs!

**1990**

The National Grid is formed. Today National Grid owns, manages and operates the national gas transmission network in Great Britain, making gas available when and where it's needed all over the country.



**1965**

Natural gas is discovered in the North Sea off Grimsby. Gradually, this replaces 'coal gas' so that gasworks are no longer needed. A massive project follows to convert 400 million gas appliances across the UK which previously ran on coal gas. The conversion project takes ten years to complete.