

THE LIGHTBULB



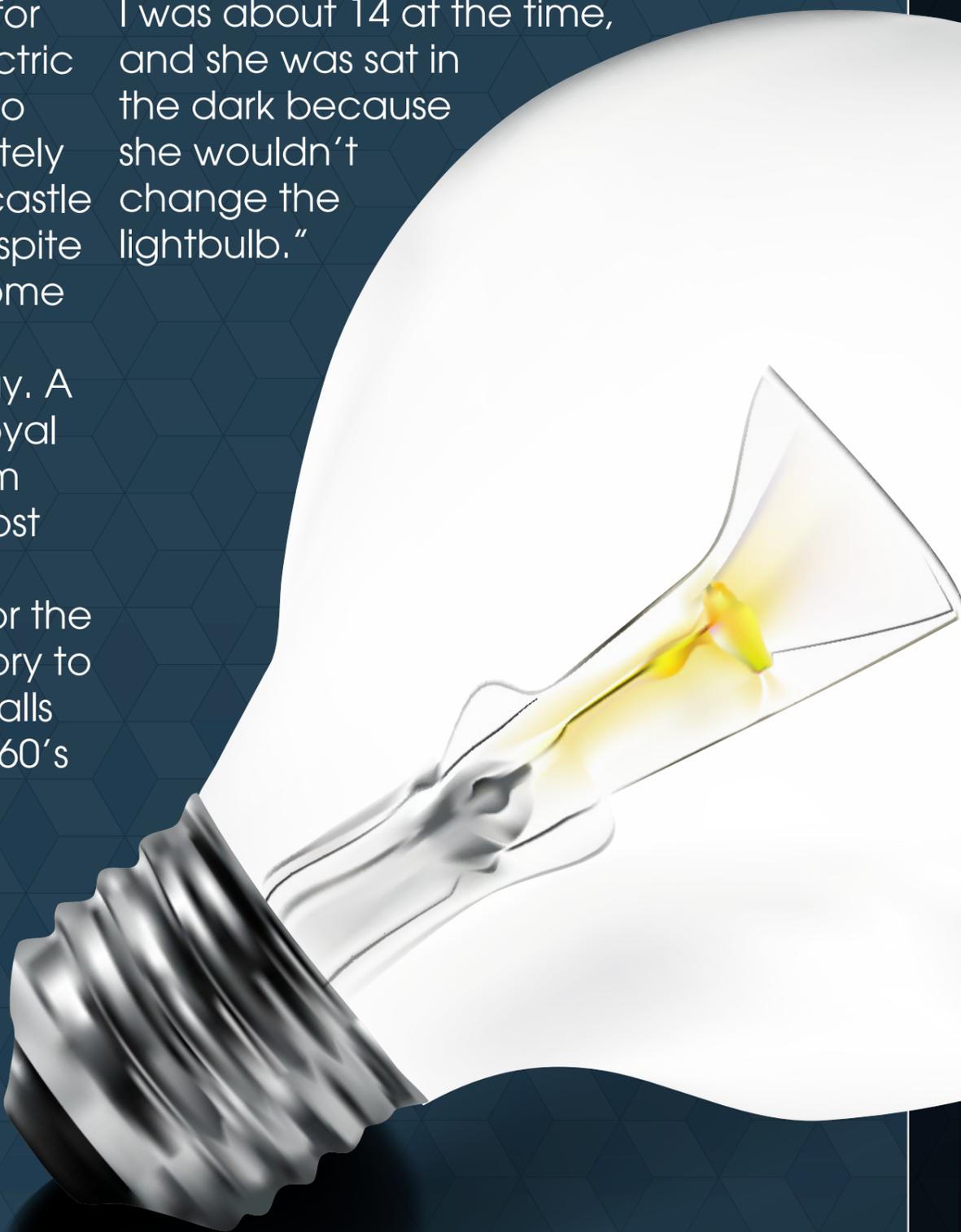
Introduction

The question of who invented the incandescent lightbulb is open to some debate. Current thinking seems to point to Humphry Davey (he of miners' lamps) back in 1802 but the popular credit for their widespread use in Britain goes to Joseph Swan who obtained British Patent 4933 in 1880 thus "lighting" the way for the transfer in Britain from gas to electric illumination. The first place in Britain to be electrically lit was the (appropriately named for us) Mosley Street in Newcastle upon Tyne on 3rd February 1879. Despite the progress to electricity it might come as some surprise to know that gas lighting does remain in use to this day. A few streets in central London, the Royal Parks and the exterior of Buckingham Palace remain gas-lit as well as almost the entire Covent Garden area. This though is by choice and probably for the nostalgic effect. Quite a different story to Balsall Heath which Pat Johnson recalls as still having gas lighting into the 1960's - and not for the nostalgia!

Joan from Highgate has a shocking story about her family's experience with lightbulbs, and indeed electricity, in general.

"Even to this day my mum, she's 64 (June from Upper Highgate Street), will not change a lightbulb because

of the electricity factor. She won't even plug a new appliance in, I have to plug a new appliance in if she's bought a kettle or a Hoover or something. She will not plug it in, I have to plug it in first. When my dad was here he did it or it was me. It would be, "Eh, the lightbulb's gone!" One time we got back after being out doing something for the day, I was about 14 at the time, and she was sat in the dark because she wouldn't change the lightbulb."



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