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## HOW ELECTRICITY HAS CHANGED OUR LIVES

During the course of the past hundred years nothing has changed and influenced the lifestyle of the people of Britain like the arrival and development of the electricity supply system.

Very few people would challenge this claim. Most of us - usually on rare occasions and for very short periods - have experienced the chaos of trying to live without electricity when there has been a failure of supply. In a matter of minutes our homes are thrown back almost into the Middle Ages as we stumble about, often deprived of all means of cooking, heating and lighting. Around us all kinds of electrically-powered aids to modern living - cookers, washing machines, refrigerators, TV and radio sets, shavers, food mixers and many others - lie useless and silent until the vital energy source on which they all depend is restored.

The transformation from the time of oil lamps and candles, coal-fired ranges and wash boilers, sweeping brushes and shaving brushes, has not, of course, happened overnight. The saga of invention, experiment, change and development spans the entire history of the electricity industry and the manufacturers of electrical appliances, and is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

In 1921 only 12% of British homes had electricity, but ten years later this figure had risen to 32%, and the National Grid - providing inter-connected electricity supplies over large areas - was under construction. Most new houses built during the 1930s were wired for electricity, and by the outbreak of war in 1939 more than half the households in the country had mains power.

The first electrical appliance to come into almost universal ownership was the electric iron, cutting down on the drudgery of washday, but in 1939 only 27% of homes had a vacuum cleaner and 18% an electric cooker. Refrigerators and washing machines were rare, found only in one household in fifty.

Today the vast majority of homes boast electric washing machines, refrigerators, and water heating systems. Almost everyone has a vacuum cleaner, nearly half of us use electricity for cooking, while ownership of electric irons and electric kettles stands at 97% and 77% respectively.

A vast range of other electrical aids to comfort and convenience are growing steadily in popularity. Some ownership figures include hairdryers (63%), shavers (36%), colour TVs (72%) mono TVs (32%), blankets (45%), food mixers (50%) and electric fires (59%).

During the past ten years ownership of freezers and fridge-freezers has grown from almost nothing to more than 50%, while rapidly growing in popularity are such relatively late arrivals on the domestic scene as showers (7%), contact grills, slow cooking pots and sandwich-makers, micro-wave ovens and video-recorders. But the British housewife is still very slow to accept dishwashers - ownership has expanded only from 2% to 3.5% since 1972. Perhaps she thinks that nothing can replace the better half at the kitchen sink!

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As the ownership of electrical appliances has increased, so manufacturers have paid much attention to producing appliances with greater efficiency and more economy.

Today's appliances - cookers, washing machines, irons, heaters and many others - are very far removed from the primitive inventions which first appeared in electricity showrooms many decades ago.

There is as yet no signs of an end to the process of innovation and improvement which has marked the progress and development of the electricity supply industry during the past Century - a process which has revolutionised every aspect of commercial, industrial and domestic life throughout the developed world - just as it has for the people of the City of Liverpool.

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