

# The Victorians

Learning Objective:

To find out about important inventions of the Victorian era.

NEXT

Can you  
name any  
inventions or  
inventors of the  
Victorian era?

Think, pair, share  
your ideas.



BACK

NEXT

Which of these objects do you think were invented during the Victorian period?



stamps



vacuum cleaners



telephones



cameras



jelly babies



bicycles



flushing toilets



lightbulbs



cars

UNDERGROUND

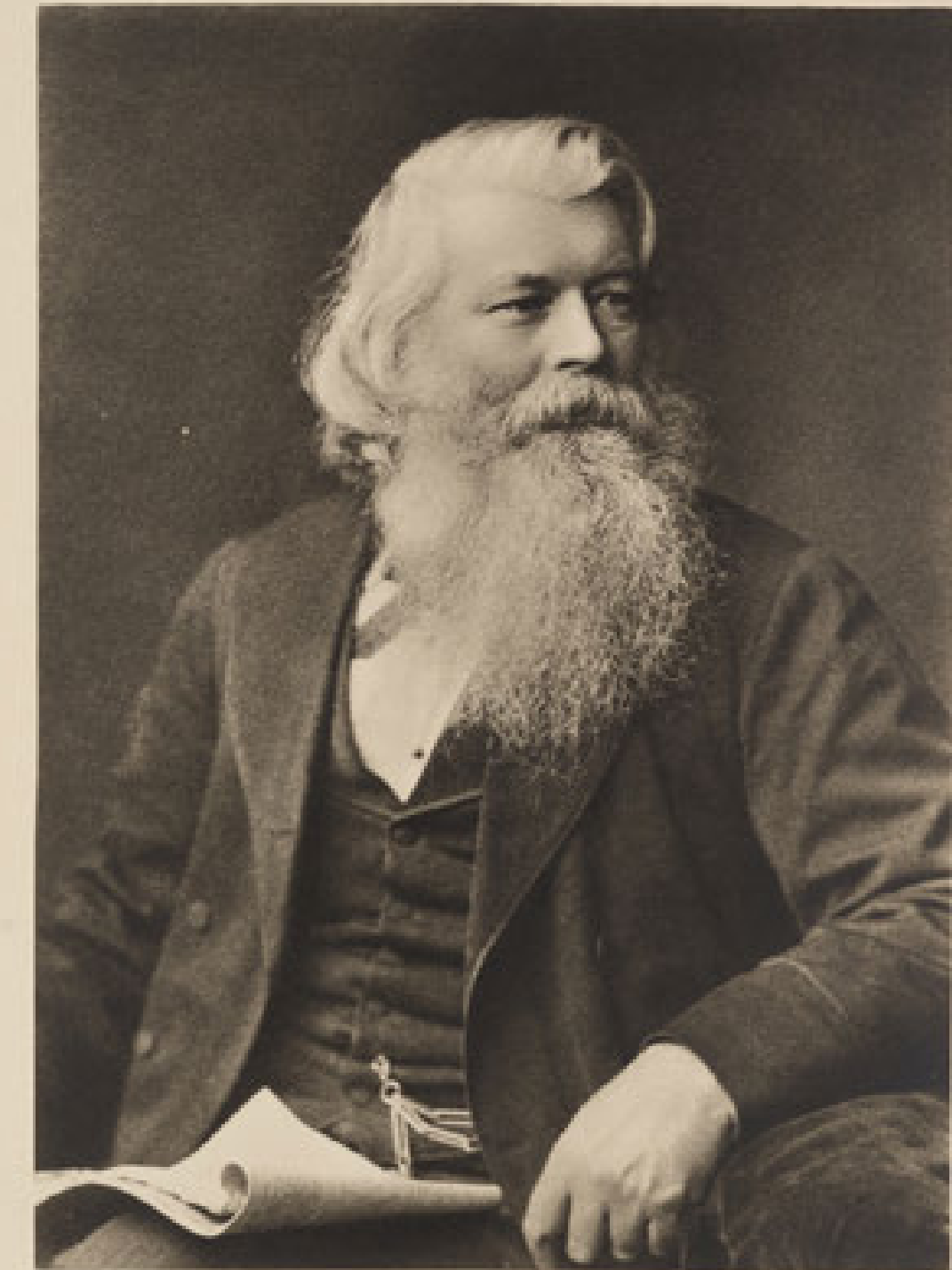
the London Underground

BACK

NEXT

## The answer is...ALL OF THEM!

There were lots of inventions during the Victorian era which shaped the way we live our lives today. One of the most important inventions was the discovery of how to generate electricity. Michael Faraday discovered that magnetism could produce electricity, leading to the first electrical generator. English inventor, Joseph Swan, created the first lightbulb in 1878 using carbon paper filament. Thomas Edison, an American inventor, then discovered that using a carbonised piece of sewing thread could make a lightbulb glow for more than 1200 hours.



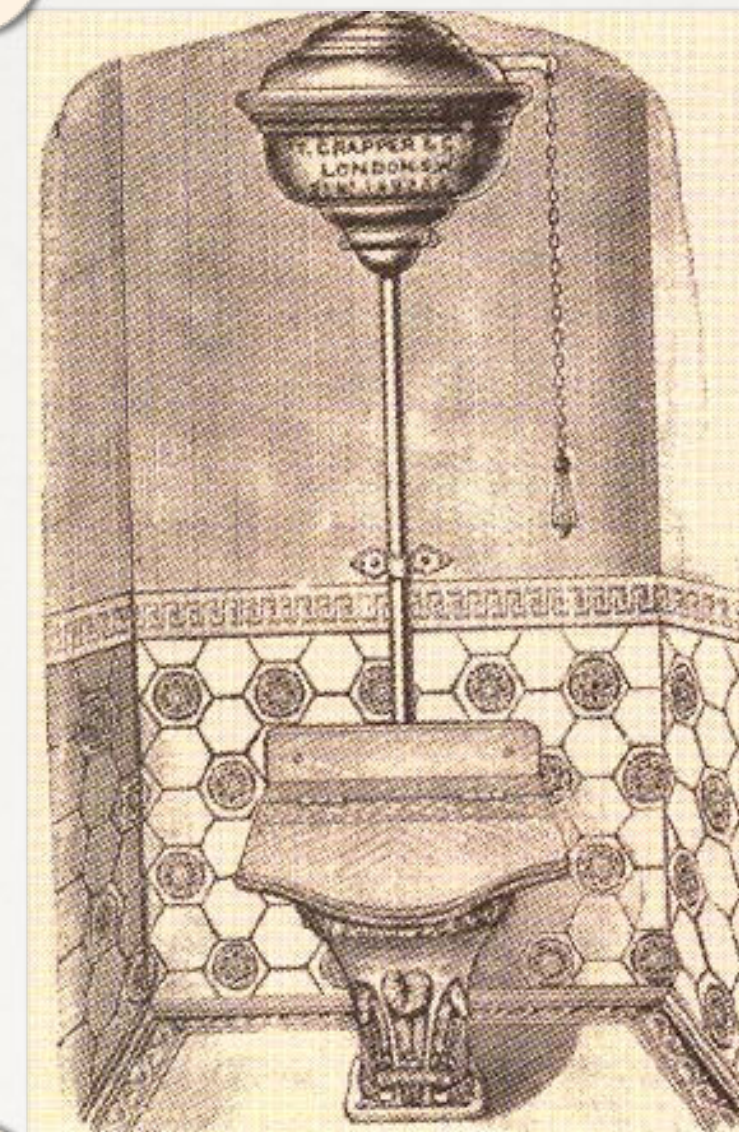
Joseph Swan

BACK

NEXT

# Flushing Toilets

Although the first flush toilet had been invented in 1775, they were not used in Britain until around 1860. Until then, most toilets were outside and were just holes in the ground. Sometimes ash was thrown in the hole to cover the smell. In 1865 a summer heatwave caused the 'Great Stink' from all the untreated human waste of an overcrowded London which prompted proper sewers to be built. The first flushing toilets were public and were soon after built in people's homes. Thomas Crapper was a plumber who set up a company who installed flushing toilets in houses. Although he didn't invent the toilet, he is credited with making them popular.



## CRAPPER'S

Improved

Registered Ornamental  
Flush-down W.C.

With New Design Cast-iron Syphon Water  
Waste Preventer.

No 518.

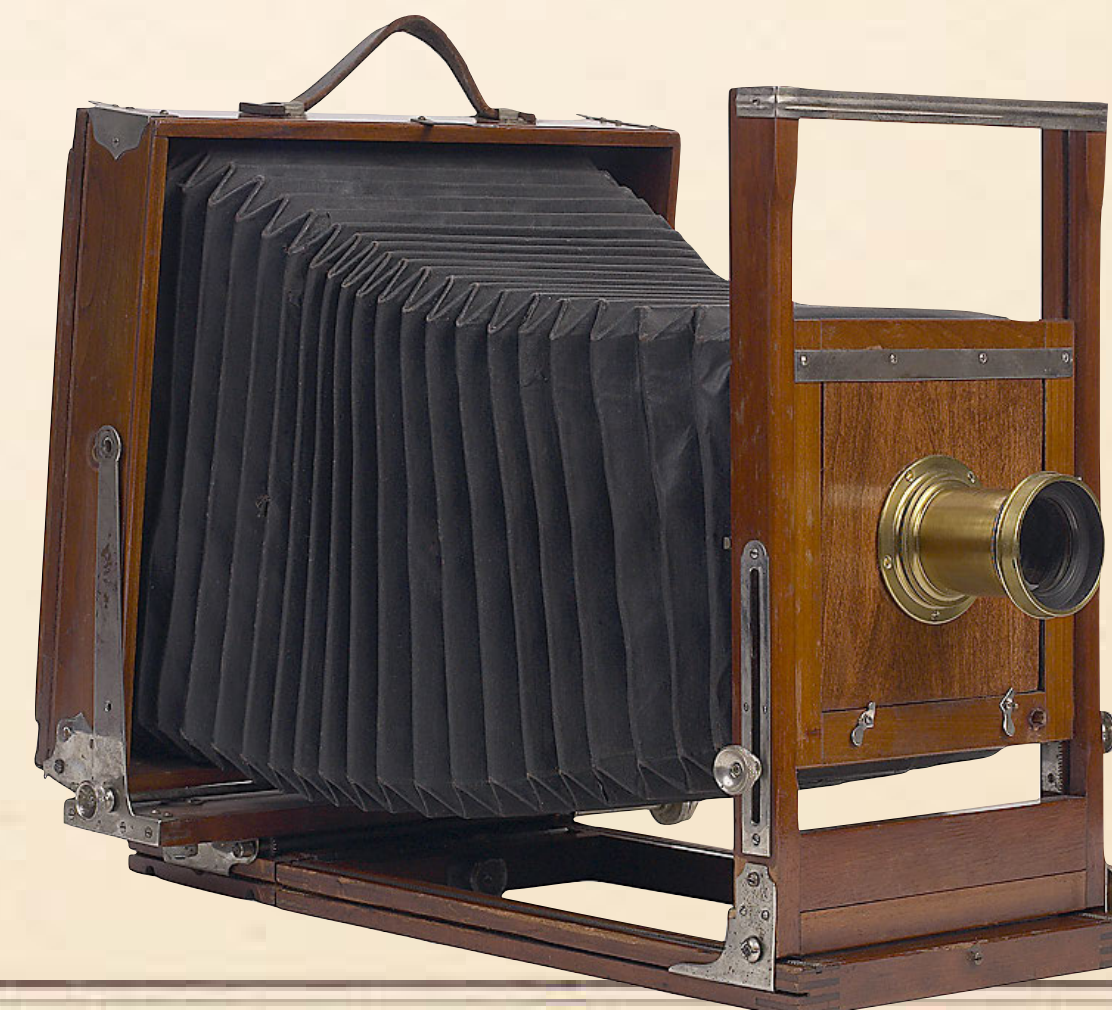
Improved Ornamental Flush-down W.C. Basin  
(Registered No. 145,823), Polished Maho-  
gany Seat with flap, New Pattern 3 gallon  
Cast-iron Syphon Cistern (Rd. No. 149,284),  
Brass Flushing Pipe and Clips, and Pendant  
Pull, complete as shown ... £6 15 0

BACK

NEXT

## Cameras

In the 18th and early 19th centuries, lots of advancements had been made in photography but it wasn't until William Fox Talbot invented light-sensitive paper in 1839 that photography in Britain became available to ordinary people. Fox Talbot also found out how to develop, fix and print a picture from a negative. Within a few years, families could have photographs taken in a photographic studio or by a photographer coming to their home.



BACK

NEXT

# Telephones



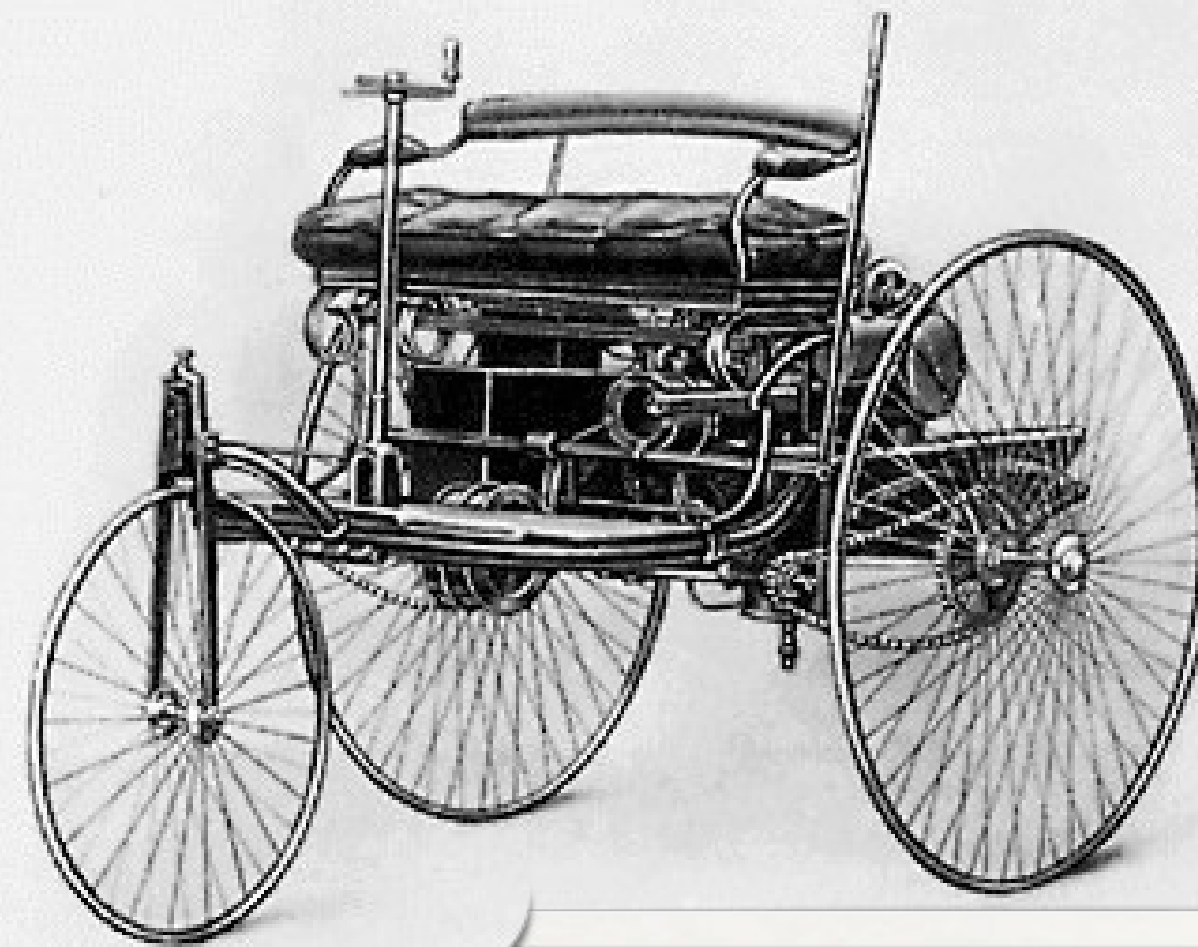
Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone in 1876. The very first telephone call happened on 6th March when Bell called to his assistant in another room: “Mr Watson, come here. I want you.” The first telephone exchange in London was installed in 1879. People had to call the operator who would then connect them to the party they wanted to speak to. During the Victorian era it was only the upper and middle classes who could afford a telephone in their house. This photograph shows Bell speaking into the first telephone in 1876.

BACK

NEXT

## Transport

The first petrol motorcar was invented by Karl Benz in Germany in 1885 but in the 1880s and 1890s only very rich people could afford cars in Britain. Bicycles were also invented during the Victorian era. The first bikes had no pedals at all and instead was described as a “walking machine”. Pedals were attached to the front wheels of bikes in 1865 and in 1872 the Penny Farthing bicycle was invented.



BACK

NEXT