

A Possible Missing Link?

by Mick Corbridge

In Eureka issue 26, I showed a copy of the Ackroyd and Best version of a cast aluminium carbide Handlamp, (the LAL66). The only example of such a lamp that I have ever seen, (and subsequently purchased), had it's front hood removed and it's handle had been replaced by a bale and hook, i.e. a design option more useful for mine use. When recently at a nearby towns antique fair, I noticed the distinctive hood shape on the tapered based cast aluminium lamp. 'Wow' I stated, to the seller 'a Ackroyd and Best complete with hood'. When I picked the lamp up, I had to eat my words: an embossed brass oval badge on the top of the hood clearly stated that the lamp was in-fact manufactured by 'Imperial Light'. When the realisation had properly sunk in, I clung tightly to the lamp until a price had been negotiated and the lamp was mine.



Pictures: - The 'Imperial Light lamp and the same with it's hood open showing the internal cast reflector.

When I got the lamp home I meticulously compared it with my hoodless 'Ackroyd and Best', and along with the small amount of catalogue information that I have. I came to the conclusion that the 2 lamps were 100% identical in design, i.e. with the same turn 't'-bar water tap, water door and hood design. It also has the same short length jet stem to accommodate the hood dimensions, and has the same thick wire handle twisted to be in-line with the front to rear elevation of the lamp. All of these features are different on the 'Thorn and Hoddle' versions, which I covered in a comparison given in Eureka issue 34. The hood is made of tin plate and attaches to the cast in oblong reflector by the top and side mounted screws. It has air inlet holes at the bottom of the hood sides, and a chimney hood on the top. The flat glass front is hinged at the top, and can be swung up for lighting etc., it is held when closed, by a bottom mounted spring clip.



Picture: - The 'Imperial Light lamp (right), shown in comparison with the similar cast body version supplied by 'Thorn and Hoddle'

I was previously considering the possibility that the body castings for these two variations were manufactured by an unknown factory, or if it could have been made by one of the lamp firms in question? The new 'Imperial Light' lamp is date stamped as 1918 which makes it earlier than both the 'Ackroyd and Best' dated at 1923, and the 'Thorn and Hoddle's which are all date stamped in the 1930's.

'Imperial Light' was taken over by 'Allen Liversidge' about 1920, and 'A.L.' was not known to have produced this style of lamp. Could therefore the design patent have then been taken over by 'Ackroyd and Best' as their similar pattern lamps are, as stated earlier, about 1923. In turn 'Ackroyd and Best' split and part became 'Hailwood and Ackroyd' in 1927, and 'Hailwood and Ackroyd' only appear to have continued with a carbide cap lamp which itself was of a completely altered design, i.e. I don't believe that they manufactured any cast aluminium carbide handlamps. 'Thorn and Hoddle', who did manufacture this pattern of lamp did so between 1934 and 1937, so could they have acquired the design and tooling etc. from the finish of 'Ackroyd and Best'? If this scenario was true then this would give a manufacturing link between all of the major carbide lamp manufacturers in Britain; i.e. 'Cremer', 'Premier', 'Wolf of Sheffield', 'Imperial Light', 'Allen Liversidge', (see Eureka issues 28 and 29), and now 'Thorn and Hoddle', 'Ackroyd and Best'; - what a fantastic thought.

Anyway, even if this possible link turns out not to be as put forward, it's still a great lamp and a nice find for me; and I will keep searching for the full picture.