

Carbide Lamps Manufactured by 'John Davis - Derby Ltd.'

by Mick Corbridge

All mining lamp collectors will have come across some items of mining collectables manufactured by John Davis, e.g. safety lamps, electric lamps, mining dials or exploders etc. When, some time ago, I came across two separate early John Davis catalogues, I was pleased to see advertisements for two rather distinct looking carbide lamps, one of which was had a different design of locking mechanism as to those of other British manufacturers. I have never seen either of these lamps in collections etc., and I decided to contact Davis Derby for any further information. Following a search of their archives, no reference of these lamps, (or of any other carbide lamp produced by themselves), was found, but in their reply they did forward some information upon their company's long history of lamp manufacture which lasted from around 1840 to the 1950's. I was surprised to be informed that the company itself was started in my hometown of Leeds in 1779 when they were then manufacturing optical surveying instruments. The Derby branch of the company was formed in around 1830, but John Davis didn't finally move there until 1843. This is about the time when the company started the manufacture of mining lamps, miner's dials and theodolites etc. In 1900 the company opened a branch in the U.S.A. in Baltimore, which I believe also still exists today. Searches of other museum & private archives came up with no further information on any carbide lamps manufactured by John Davis.

The two lamps in question are shown here, both look to be a good design and knowing the high quality of other John Davis lamps, they should have been well made. The standard pattern lamp (this page) has a unusual design of eccentric locking, which I have only seen before on a German manufacturer's design. A further interesting point to note re this lamp is the small size of the smallest of the three versions offered, i.e. only 4 1/2 inches, and classed as a half shift lamp having a 4-5 hours burning time.

The other lamp is a canister lamp, which appears to have a unusual water adjustment screw, and a large turn flag on the water door. This lamp has standard simplified eccentric locking, similar to most other lamps of this pattern, & again it was offered for sale in three sizes. Note the statement on the advert i.e. 'not complying with the Home Office Rules', I wonder what this refers to as the advert already has covered the condition of open flame i.e. 'for non-gaseous mines'.

It is interesting to note that the company of Davis Derby is still in existence today after first been sold by the family in 1962, it was then returned to the original company name of Davis Derby in 1993.

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Acetylene Miners' Lamps.

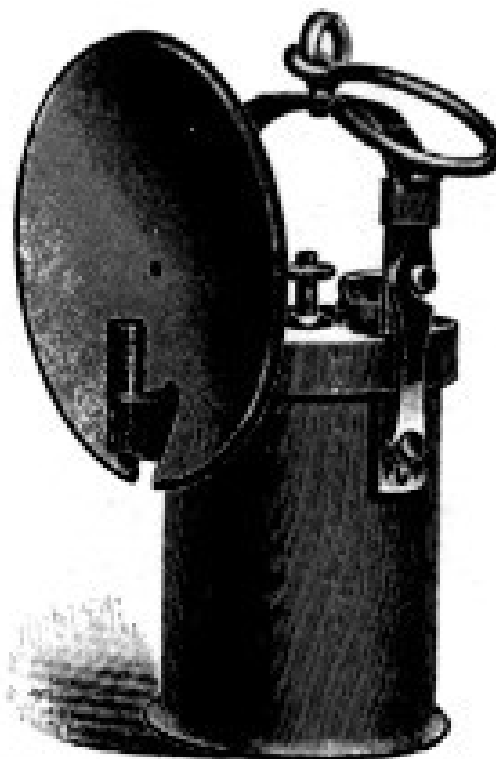
OPEN TYPE.

FOR NON-GASEOUS MINES.

NOT complying with the Home Office Rules.

Strongly constructed in galvanized steel cases, with brass mounts.

Made in the undermentioned sizes and capacities:—



Cable Wound.	Height.	Weight (about).	Burning Hours.	Price.
HAKE ...	4 ½ inches	1 ½ lbs.	4—5	7/9
HUNT ...	5 ½ " "	2 ¼ " "	8—9	8 3
HORT ...	6 " "	2 lbs. 6 ozs.	12	8/9

Sample lamps upon application.