

Unknown British Carbide Lamp Patterns

by Mick Corbridge

When I was researching information re the history of the well known lamp manufacturer 'Premier Lamp – Leeds', I was fortunate enough to locate and meet with Ken Pickard, whom had been employed at 'Premier between the years of 1940 and 1984, when at this time 'Premier Lamp' went into receivership. For much of this period, Mr. Pickard had been the Production Manager at 'Premier', and so knew much about the various lamp patterns etc. He mentioned that 'Premier' had owned a small private lamp collection, which had within it a couple of prototype lamp styles, which had never been followed through into production. He personally had given this collection to a local museum in 1988, so I decided to see if this collection could be located. Following discussions with the museum in question, no knowledge or records of such a collection could then be found, but they did offer a search for the items. A few weeks later they requested me to visit to view the lamps that they had located in store, but very disappointingly, when I attended and viewed, the lamps found were of non -'Premier' manufacture, and worst of all – there were no carbides.

Some time later a record of the museum receiving such a collection of 'Premier' carbide lamps was found, but there was still no sign of the actual lamps. The museum curator then remembered a small stock of lamps housed in the store rooms of another local museum, so together we made a visit to check out what was there. Again, the viewing of the lamps in question was somewhat disappointing, as non were 'Premier', and most were non-mining pattern, this again was not the collection that I sought. The only interesting find on the day was a very nice looking carbide cap lamp.



This plated lamp was an unfired example of a mining pattern cap lamp that I had never come across before, (or since). There were no manufacturers markings of any type, but I once had a hand lamp, and two bicycle lamps with similar details, i.e. the same style of water tap sitting in a recess with a quarter turn ring which when turned uncovered holes which then allowed the water tank to be topped up. Also the body styles were somewhat similar to my original lamps, and these lamps had been manufactured by 'P & H' and 'Lucas', so I am 90% sure that this cap lamp was manufactured by one of these two firms, 'Lucas' possibly the favourite choice.

Some time later, I was given the name of the curator that had worked at the original museum at the time when Mr. Pickard had taken the 'Premier' lamps down in 1988. The curator was by now retired, but I was able to locate and later speak with him, and he remembered the lamps in question. He then gave me the name of two people whom once tried to catalogue the lamps, and later discussion with these persons

led to the fact that they knew where the lamps were now stored. I arranged to meet with one of these persons down at the museum, and within a short time of searching the various storerooms, the lost 'Premier' collection was at last re-found.

In the collection were about 15 carbide lamps, but the most of them were well known produced patterns, though most were very early designs and nice to see in original 'as manufactured' condition. The long awaited high point was the handling of 3 carbide hand lamps that I had never seen before, either physically or in any 'Premier' product catalogue. Two of the lamps were of the same style but of different sizes, and the other was a properly manufactured lamp, which looked like it was based on a hybrid of 2 well-known lamp designs.



The two sized lamps were similar to the standard 'King' pattern, but had a very unusual pattern of locking mechanism. This was a 'pull back and down', or 'push forward and up' carrying handle, which had a large strong spring device that located into a groove on the top of the lamp. The downward force of the spring held the two halves of the lamp tightly together as required, and location notches in the sides of the handle bale, retained the handle in position when locked. Each of these two lamps had the early large style of 'Premier' brass embossed badge on

the back of the water container, showing its manufacture as been approximately before 1935. Later discussions with Mr. Pickard regarding these two lamps indicated that he believed that these were going to be a special customer order, which was never followed through, and were produced before his time with the company. What I would give for those lamps!

The other lamp of particular interest, was a very nice combination pattern of lamp which I had again never seen reference to before. The top section of the lamp was of the standard 'Cornwall' lamp design but much smaller in diameter. It had the normal angled jet and the in-line bridal arrangement as well as the same reflector bracket. The bottom section of the lamp was that of a 'Cleveland' pattern with the narrowed waist, and was the same size and style exactly for a standard 'Cleveland' lamp. Normally there is no way that a 'Cornwall' top section could fit onto a 'Cleveland' base section, as the diameters and thread sizes are completely different. This shows the special manufacture of the top section to allow this pattern of lamp to be made. This lamp had the smaller style of 'Premier' badge, indicating manufacture possibly around the mid 40's.

It's a pity that 'Premier' didn't carry through with production of this style of lamp; it would at least have been a nice looking addition to lamp collections.

