

Unmarked Carbide Cap Lamp

by Dave Johnson

Recently I purchased a carbide cap lamp that I have never seen before. Unfortunately this lamp has no markings to indicate who manufactured it or where it was manufactured. It was purchased from an individual who lives near Radstock, Somerset, UK, who said that it was found in the home of an old family member that had worked in a Radstock area coal mine.



Profile of unmarked brass cap lamp.

Radstock is a former mining and railway town located on the old Roman “Fosse Way.” The “Fosse Way” is an old Roman road which linked Exeter to Lincoln, a distance of 182 miles. In that distance it is never more than 6 miles from a straight line, making it a remarkably direct route. Radstock has some unique architecture associated with its mining and Victorian heritage. It has been described as the best preserved former coal mining town in England. The

Radstock area is known for its past association with coal mining, with the last coal pit closing in the 1970s. The coalfield was small, its surface outcrop extended from just north of the Mendip Hills. Coal mining was first referenced in Somerset in the 16th century, at the peak of coal mining 79 separate collieries were operating in the county.



Top view of lamp showing sliding waterdoor closed and open.

Manufactured entirely of brass this lamp is well made and very sturdy. The base is attached by an unusual internal cam device that is functionally similar to the external cam used on the Lu-Mi-Num lamp, or the internal cam lock of the Justrite Jiffy. This cam system uses two round pins in the bottom of the water chamber and these ride on a sloped ring on the inside of the base to tighten and hold the base in place. The cam pins slip through two slots in the top of the base when the base is removed and re-attached. The gasket just sits on the smooth top of the base and would be susceptible to loss every time the lamp is opened.

Another unusual feature of this lamp is its sliding water door. The hook is an unusual configuration made of brass wire. The lamp would need no cap braces with this style hook. The



reflector is soldered in place, there is no reflector brace and no igniter. There is a threaded water control knob.

Top of base showing bevel for cam lock.



The base is made of three separate pieces, top, bottom and side, as is the water chamber. The side is crimped, overlapped and soldered on the inside. The lamp stands 3 ?" high to the top of the water control knob and is 2" in diameter. The reflector is 2 ?" in diameter. Any information that our UK readers could provide on this lamp would be greatly appreciated.

Left: underside of water chamber showing cam pins.

Right: top view of base. Note the vertical seam on the side.

