

Miners' Ball and Peg Lamps

by Dave Johnson

A miners' lamp unique to the mines of South Wales is the ball & peg lamp, just as the “midge” lamp is unique to the northern English coal fields, the Lake Superior-style hook candleholders are unique to the Wisconsin/Minnesota/Michigan iron and copper mines, and blende lamps vary in style by region of use (Freiberger, Halleiner, Freitaler and Schneeberger).



Ball & peg lamps fall into the “spherical font” lamp realm, as do many of the oil lamps used in blende carriers and the German urn miners’ lamps

The ball & peg lamps were manufactured of either steel or brass, or a combination of both. Dating from at least the 1850s through the early 1900s, these rare lamps are seldom seen by collectors today.

They were all manufactured with screw-threads at the top and bottom of the spherical fuel font. A closed-end threaded tube could be screwed to the base to serve as a handle, or screwed over the burner to protect the wick, and allow the lamp to be carried in the pocket without leaking. These lamps could be carried in the hand and reportedly attached to the miner’s cap through the use of a loop on the cap to hold the handle. These oil lamps attached to a miners’ cap would have stood up higher than the better-known oilwick cap lamps, making them inconvenient in low-headroom mines.



Pictured here are three significantly different ball & peg lamps in my collection. The one on the left is of all steel construction except from brass threads. The entire handle unscrews from the bottom of the font and screws over the burner. It measures 5 5/8" tall and 2.5" in diameter.

The center lamp is of all brass construction and weighs almost twice what the two steel lamps each weigh. The entire handle unscrews from the bottom of the font and screws over the burner. The handle is conical and comes to a very sharp point that could easily be used as a weapon. The fuel font is not made of two half spheres with a crimped and soldered seam running around the circumference of the font, as in the other two lamps seen here. This lamp measures 6" tall and 2.3" in diameter.



The lamp on the right is mostly steel with brass threads and a brass piece at the end of the fixed handle. Just the brass end cap unscrews and screws over the very short burner, with the remainder of the handle remaining in place, an uncommon feature on this type of lamp. This lamp measures 5" tall and 2.8" in diameter.



Date of Application, 23rd Apr., 1894

Complete Specification Left, 31st May, 1894—Accepted, 7th July, 1894

PROVISIONAL SPECIFICATION.

Improvements in Miners' Lamps.

I, **ARTHUR MORRIS**, of 17 and 26, Duke Street, Aberdare, in the County of Glamorgan, Manufacturer, do hereby declare the nature of this invention to be as follows :—

My invention relates to miners' or colliers' lamps of the kind provided with a
5 removable shank by which the lamp is held.

Hitherto this shank has usually been left open at the lower end, but according to my invention I close the said shank and make it in two parts adapted to be screwed together or otherwise connected so that the lower part of the shank may be utilized
30 as a receptacle for matches and in such a manner that when closed there is no risk of the matches becoming ignited and at the same time when a match is required it is simply necessary to unscrew the receptacle from the other part of the shank.

It will be obvious that this arrangement does not prevent the shank being used as a cover for the lamp burner.

In practice I find it advantageous to provide any suitable part of the lamp with
15 a frictional surface for igniting the matches.

Dated the 23rd day of April 1894.

G. F. REDFERN & Co.,
4, South Street, Finsbury, London, Agents for the Applicant.

COMPLETE SPECIFICATION.

20 **Improvements in Miners' Lamps.**

I, **ARTHUR MORRIS**, of 17 and 26, Duke Street, Aberdare, in the County of Glamorgan, Manufacturer, do hereby declare the nature of this invention and in what manner the same is to be performed, to be particularly described and ascertained in and by the following statement :—

25 My invention relates to miners' or colliers' lamps of the kind provided with a removable shank by which the lamp is held.

Hitherto this shank has usually been left open at the lower end, but according to my invention I close the said shank and make it in two parts adapted to be screwed together or otherwise connected so that the lower part of the shank may be utilized
30 as a receptacle for matches and in such a manner that when closed there is no risk of the matches becoming ignited and at the same time when a match is required it is simply necessary to unscrew the receptacle from the other part of the shank.

It will be obvious that this arrangement does not prevent the shank being used as a cover for the lamp burner.

35 In practice I find it advantageous to provide any suitable part of the lamp with a frictional surface for igniting the matches.

To enable my invention to be fully understood I will describe the same by reference to the accompanying drawing, in which :—

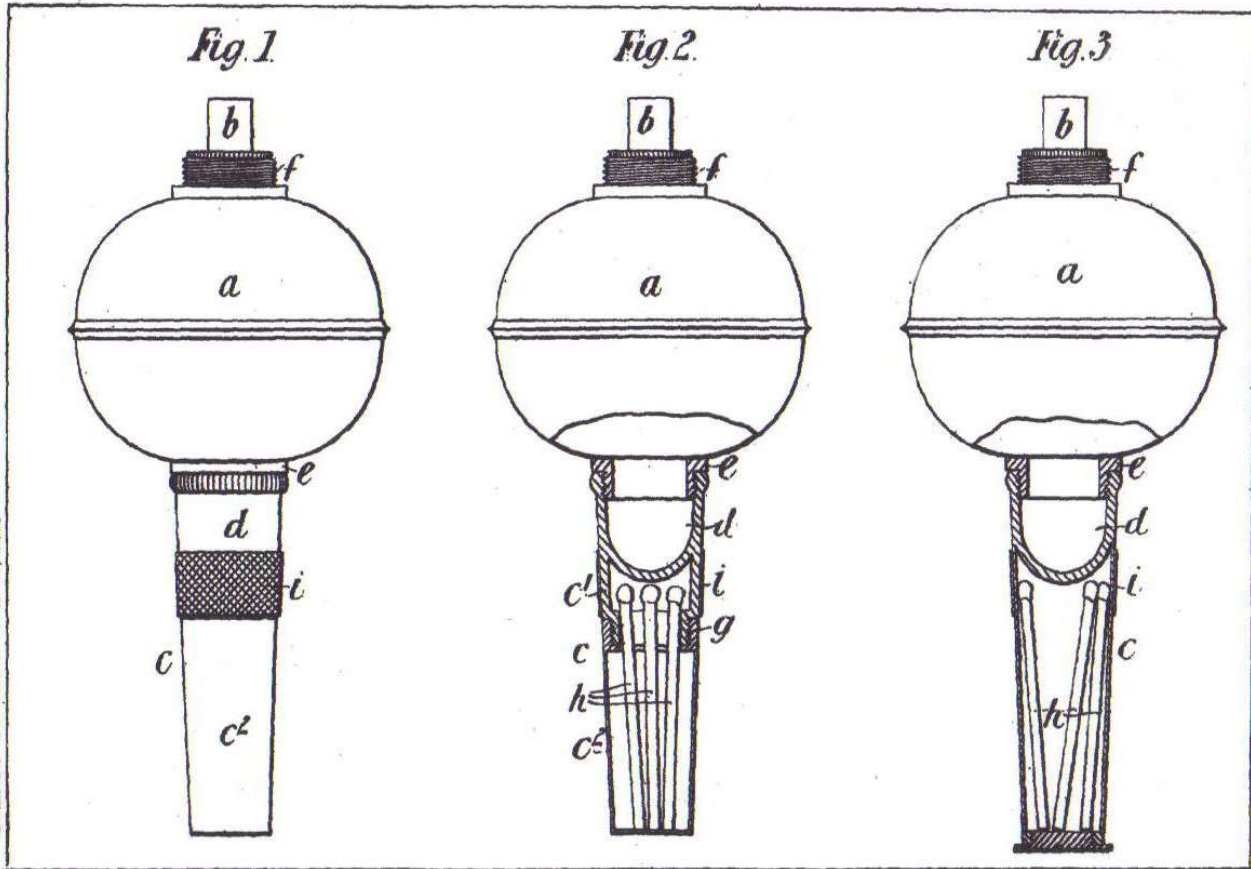
Figure 1 is an elevation of a miner's lamp having my improvements applied
40 thereto; and,

Figure 2 is a sectional elevation of the same.

Figure 3 is a sectional elevation illustrating a modification.

[This Drawing is a reproduction of the Original on a reduced scale]

(1 SHEET)
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MORRIS' COMPLETE SPECIFICATION.



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Melby & Son, Photo-Litho.

Although rare today, these lamps were in common enough use that at least one British patent for ball & peg lamps exists, granted to Arthur Morris, of Aberdare, Glamorgan County. Aberdare is also the home of safety lamp manufacturer E. Thomas & Williams, established in 1860. Coal and iron mining were at one time one of the primary industries of Glamorgan County and the last deep mine, Tower Colliery, closed January 8, 2008. Tower Colliery was the oldest continuously worked deep coal mine in the United Kingdom (started 1805), and possibly the world, and the only mine of its kind remaining in the South Wales Valleys. It is located near the villages of Hirwaun and Rhigos, north of the town of Aberdare in the Cynon Valley, south Wales. A few smaller coal mines, like Aberpergwm Colliery and Unity Mine, still operate within Glamorgan County but are only a faint shadow of the formerly significant coal mining industry.

Morris' patent, granted July 7th of 1894, was for a sealed matchesafe in the handle of the lamp, along with a knurled match striker encircling the handle, see the patent drawing. If other patents exist for the ball & peg lamp I am not aware of them.

My thanks to Manfred Stutzer for sending me the patent information.