

MINATURE SAFETY LAMPS FROM THOMAS AND WILLIAMS

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E. Thomas and Williams of Abedare, South Wales, have manufactured safety lamps since 1860 and are one of the most famous manufacturers of safety lamps in Great Britain. For many years they have manufactured a miniature lamp, some 6.5 inches high by 2.25 inches in diameter, as a presentation or commemorative item. The lamp was never intended for use underground and has no lock. However, they are very well made with a single copper gauze, typical wire wick adjustment, glass retaining ring, etc. The workmanship has deteriorated slightly over the years with the latest versions having coarser mesh gauze with poor soldering, no wrench indentations in the glass retaining ring, and a split eye (instead of a ring) for the hook. The early versions are marked "ET & W" and all have the Prince of Wales three feather symbol (shown in Figure 1) stamped on the bonnet or, in the latest versions, in a raised design on the nameplate. This symbol is found on nearly all Thomas and Williams lamps and sometimes is the only mark on a lamp (take note, I have early unbonneted lamps with this symbol and they were sold in the United States!).

The earliest example that the author has seen is in the Lester Bernstein collection and is nickel plated with the following inscription:

VISIT OF
H. E. THE ARGENTINE AMBASSADOR
DR DON M. E. MALBRAH
TO
THE POWELL DUFFRYN BARGOED COLLIERY
3RD MAY 1932

Other examples are shown in Figure 2. Incidentally, the Powell Duffryn Company was one of the largest, if not the largest, coal mining company in South Wales and owned several hundred collieries. These mines were nationalized after World War II and Powell Duffryn ceased to exist as a mining company, although it is still in business today. The lamps were still available in gift stores ten years ago for about \$50. They may still be available today although I have not noticed any recently, but then I have not been looking for one either!

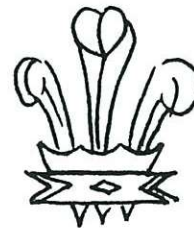


Figure 1. The Prince of Wales three feathers symbol.



Figure 2. Left: Pre World War II nickel plated version engraved "POWELL DUFFRYN ASSOCIATED COLLIERIES LIMITED." Middle: Post World War II chrome plated version mounted on wooden plinth with the silver plate engraved "Vera and Don from Beat and Fred in remembrance of their visit to the States - June 1952." The lamp has only the three feathers symbol. Right: Recent brass version with embossed manufacturers plate and commemorative plate stating "Investiture of the Prince of Wales Caernarven Castle - 1st July 1969." (All lamps from the author's collection)