



POPULAR COLLECTABLES

# *Lamps & Lighting*

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GUINNESS

• POPULAR •  
• COLLECTABLES •

# *lamps and lighting*

Josie A. Marsden

GUINNESS PUBLISHING

## Dedication

For my daughter, Natalie  
with love

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# *introduction*

This book is intended as an informative guide for the collector and buyer of antique and period lamps. It deals primarily with the period 1800–1940 and is divided into sections dealing with the four main light sources: candle, oil, gas and electricity. Each section starts with a short history and then developments are arranged chronologically, followed by styles divided into categories of ceiling, wall, floor, table and lampshades. This is to facilitate planning complete lighting schemes in any given style.

There is an interesting illustrated list of the leading Art Nouveau and Art Deco designers and manufacturers of light fittings. Whereas their lamps may appear on the market infrequently, and fetching such high prices as to be out of reach of the majority of us, the styles that they originated were often copied and can still be found at more reasonable prices. At the end of the book is an extensive glossary of antique lighting terminology and nomenclature, and a comprehensive index for easy reference.

Price guides have been given where applicable, but it must be stressed that they are only guidelines. Prices can be affected by so many things including: age, condition, size, fashion, colour, supply and demand, where you buy, and whether two people at an auction are determined to have the item. Lamps are not automatically valuable because they are old. Two 1930s table lamps sold for similar prices when new could be worth vastly different amounts today, due entirely to fashion or desirability. Lamps and lighting fixtures which are unrestored and not in working order may have vital parts missing, but they will be much cheaper than those offered for sale fully restored and wired ready for use. Most people



ABOVE: One of a pair of carved giltwood and gesso wall lights, c. 1920. £195–£325

RIGHT: Art Deco white metal lady with marbled glass shade, c. 1930. £135–£165







French three-arm painted iron chandelier with entwined leaves and tulips, c.1912. £195-£295

who buy antique light fittings want to put them to practical use, so remember, a bargain is not a real bargain if the item is unusable.

I would like to thank all the people who have worked so hard to make this book a success, especially my editor Beatrice Frei and photographer Peter Greenhalf. Special thanks are also due to Iris Wood and Linda North, Diana and John for finding me so many of the lovely lamps featured in this book and for their constant support and encouragement.

My appreciation also goes to all those who have given me their help often at short notice; Maggie Blockley, Valerie Frost, Ruth Leveson, Maev Alexander, Nadine Hanson at Harrods, Stella Beddoe at Brighton Museum, Ron Miles, Mr Angove; Barbara Needham and last but not least my husband, Cedric.

Josie A. Marsden, Magic Lanterns Antique Lighting, at By George, 23 George Street, St Albans, Herts.



# *candles*



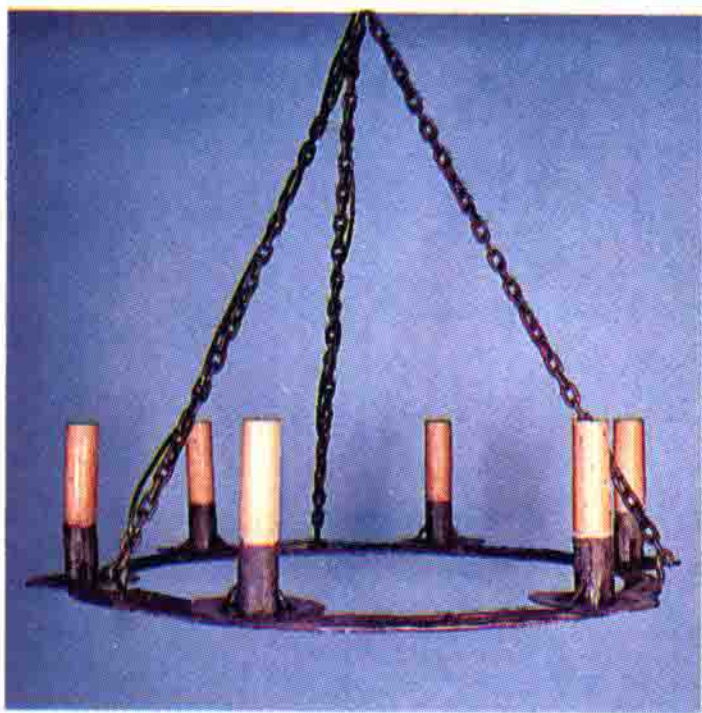
Five-arm painted tinware chandelier.



# early history

From the beginning of time man has sought to find a way to lighten the darkness of night, which has always been feared as it conceals all kinds of dangers, and yet almost half of our lives are spent in its darkness.

The early cave dwellers found that their wood fires not only warmed them but provided some useful light and kept the wild animals at bay. In fact for more than 30 000 years the domestic fire was the only source of illumination for the majority of people in all parts of the world. It has continued to be used as the principal source of light in the home for thousands of years, long after oil lamps, gas lights and even electricity were discovered.



Ecclesiastical 18th-century iron chandelier for candles, converted to electricity with imitation wooden candles.  
£400-£600

## • SPLINT • • LAMPS •

The first portable lights were simply blazing pieces of wood plucked from the fire, and wedged into fissures in the rocks. The earliest candles were made from wood split into thin pieces (splints) for easier combustion. Special devices held the individual splints vertically or horizontally or provided a small bowl in which to burn a small quantity of them.



# early history

## • FIRE • BASKETS •

From the times of the ancient pharaohs of Alexandria, iron baskets and bronze bowls filled with fire and attached to long poles, or fixed to the wall, were called fire baskets or cressets. They were used outside buildings, for ceremonial occasions, and in lighthouses. Versions of these were still made as recently as the 18th century.

Bog pine, popular in Elizabethan Britain, was particularly good for illumination as it was full of turpentine. Split and dried, it was often used instead of candles wherever there was a plentiful supply.



Victorian ecclesiastical  
brass candle lamp.  
£195-£375

## • RUSH • LIGHTS •

From medieval times and earlier, rushes were made into a type of candle. The rushes, gathered in early autumn, were peeled, leaving one or two strips to support the soft pithy centre. They were then dried and dipped in tallow. The tallow wall was quite thin, but a rush light 2½ feet long would burn for about an hour. Rush lights were more economical than tallow candles and they did not need snuffing as did candles when charred pieces of the wick had to be cut off and removed about every half-hour. Eleven rushes giving about half an hour's light each (5½ hours' light altogether) could be purchased for a farthing (there were 960 farthings in £1) whereas a halfpenny (480 to £1) tallow candle might burn for about 2 hours. Either way lighting was expensive.

## • CANDLES •

Candles have been used for lighting churches, municipal and domestic dwellings for over 2000 years but there

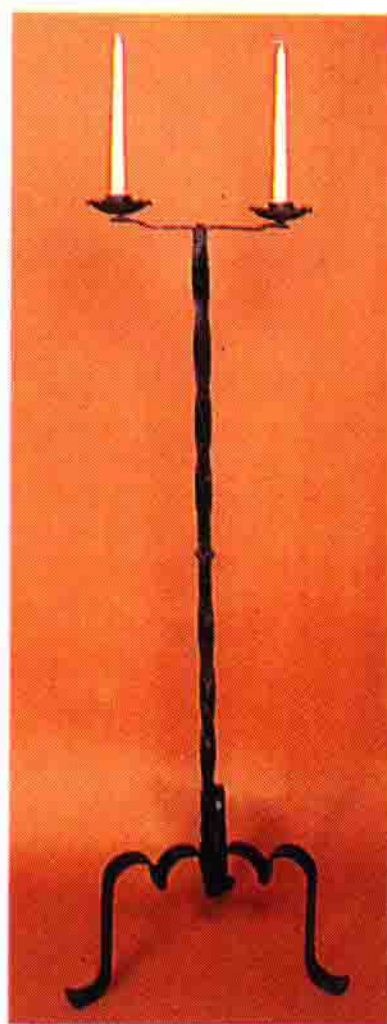




Victorian three-arm iron and turned oak chandelier.  
£150-£350

is no reliable information about the use of candles in England until around the 10th century AD. Historians generally believe that the Romans introduced them into Britain, and from Saxon times artificial lighting was predominantly by candles.

During the Middle Ages the chandler (candlemaker) became an important and stalwart member of the community and the art of his craft developed steadily. Candles were made either of wax (beeswax) or tallow, which was a mixture of glycerides, including stearic, palmitic and oleic acids and extracted chiefly from the suet of sheep and cattle. Any leftover fat was used for tallow candles or rush lights and frequently this was an edible fat. Wax candles were always used in churches and by those who could afford them, as they kept their shape and gave a cleaner, brighter light with less guttering. Tallow was much cheaper but far softer and always needed to be set in a candle cup. Tallow candles would often give as good a light as those made of wax but only for about 10 minutes,



18th-century iron tripod-leg floor candelabra.  
£195-£450



# early history



Arts and Crafts triangular  
iron three-light chandelier  
with fancy chain.  
£165-£295

then the light would gradually grow dimmer and dimmer. They were also smoky, messy, guttered easily and smelt very unpleasant.

By mid-Victorian times (c. 1880) tallow candles were about 12 times, and spermaceti nearly 30 times as costly as gas (using an Argand burner) for an equal intensity of light.

It was not until 1820 that the Frenchman Cambacères discovered that by plaiting the cotton wick instead of twisting it, it would bend over into the flame as the candle burned and be consumed like the rush stems, thereby producing a snuffless candle. In 1831 it was found that if boric acid was allowed to impregnate the plaited wick, 'guttering' was also eliminated.

Candles remained the main source of domestic light (apart from firelight) well into the 20th century in spite of the advance and popularity of gas and oil lighting. By Edwardian times they were made in all manner of sizes and materials and for all occasions. Elblana, Ozokerit and Patent wax were advised as best for carriage lamps, whereas spermaceti, planet sperm, parastrine shade and whitehall sperm were recommended for use in Arctic lamps and other spring-loaded candle lamps or candles requiring shades when a full upright candle was needed.

Candlesticks and the evolution of their design through the ages is an extensive subject with very many different styles and therefore only those items that can be called candle lamps have been included.

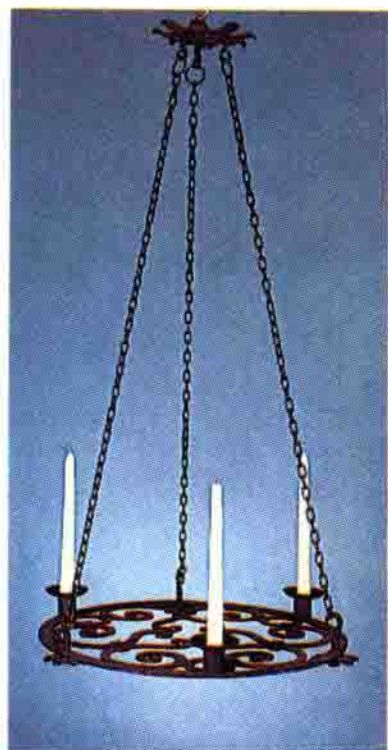


# ceiling

## • CHANDELIERS •

Early candle holders consisted of iron spikes or prickets set in crude wooden beams called candle beams which were the forerunners of chandeliers. They could also be mounted on squares or circles of iron and suspended on chains. These continued to be made well into the 19th century. Only wax candles can be used on prickets as tallow candles are far too soft and need a candle socket to support them. Iron and wood candle chandeliers were frequently used in churches and inns and some country houses. Their simplicity gives them a special charm and today they look most effective in country-style kitchens, breakfast and family rooms. They are also most effective in barn and stable conversions as well as cottages. They can be converted to electricity but they look wonderful with candles as they give a warm ambience to the room. Circular iron chandeliers can be used to display kitchenware or bunches of herbs or dried flowers suspended on meat hooks. At Christmas time they can be entwined with holly and laurel.

Early ironwork was always forged by hand and careful examination of old iron chandeliers will show irregularities only found in handmade articles.



Victorian circular wrought iron three-light chandelier.  
£135-£295

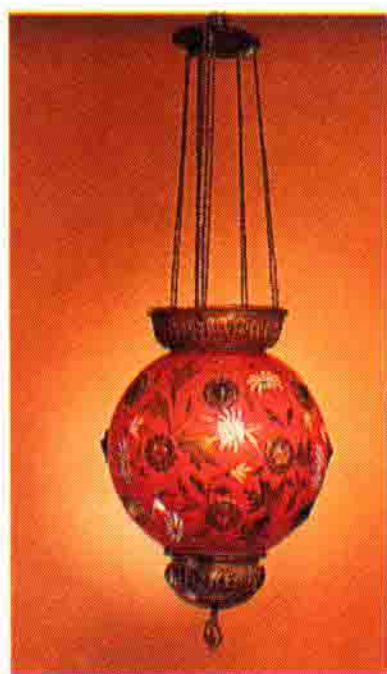
Dutch-style five-arm brass chandelier c.1920.  
£145-£275



# ceiling



Victorian Rise and Fall candle lamp with original ruby glass. Note the brass weight and pulleys that enabled the lamp to be pulled down for lighting and extinguishing.  
£195-£495



Early Victorian Rise and Fall pendant lamp for one candle, with ornate rose glass shade, hand painted and gilded and inset with coloured cut glass jewels.  
£275-£550

Many of the chandeliers were converted (often rather badly) to electricity in the 1920s, but it is usually fairly easy to reconvert them for candle use. They must have a candle cup or pricket and a drip tray if they are to be used for candles. Lack of cups and drip trays does not necessarily mean that the item is of a later date, as they may have been taken off when the electrical conversion was done; but it is an indication that you should look at the whole of the item more carefully, to check its age.

By the 17th century wealthy and titled people had candle chandeliers finely made in bronze as well as steel, wood and iron. These became very elaborate, and were made in crystal glass, gilded wood, gilded iron, as well as ormolu in the 18th and 19th centuries. Most of these chandeliers are now in museums. Occasionally they are sold at auctions for thousands of pounds.

In Victorian England and well into the 20th century, while the horse remained one of the principal modes of transport, every town and village had a local blacksmith. Many of these blacksmiths were skilled craftsmen who produced beautiful household artifacts in iron, including lamps. In France and Italy, at the turn of the century, artist/craftsmen forged delightful objects, beautiful flowers, leaves and animals in iron which they painted in Provençal colours and made into chandeliers, wall, table and floor lamps for candles and electricity. Sometimes the fine ironwork was gilded and looked very grand.

Painted or gilded iron chandeliers fashioned with entwined flowers and leaves look delightful in a lounge, conservatory or garden room, and add a wonderfully extravagant air to the bathroom.

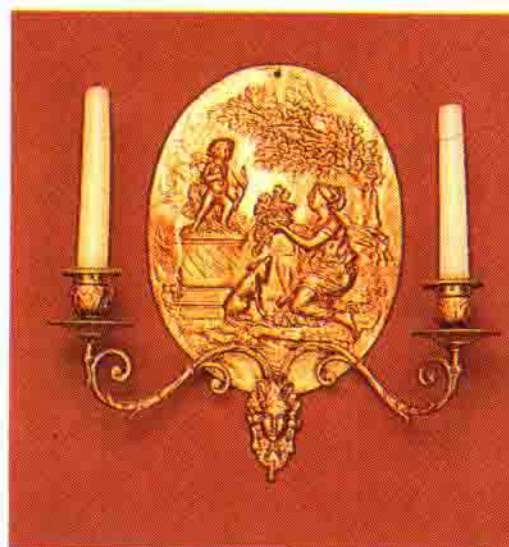


## • SCONCES •

Ever since candles were invented, people have been trying to find ways to improve their illumination. It was soon noticed that if candles were placed in front of a mirror or a brightly polished surface, the amount of light thrown out was greatly magnified. Therefore mirrors were fitted with one or more candleholders in front of them. Also, wall sconces for candles frequently had large backplates of polished bronze or copper, often with attractive designs on them. These sconces make lovely decorative items for lounges, hall, bathroom or bedrooms. Although very early examples are hard to find and prohibitively expensive for the average collector, many Victorian and Edwardian examples can be found at reasonable prices. Often these were made in the styles of earlier centuries. The most valuable ones are those that retain their original mirrors, even if the silvering shows signs of wear.

## • GIRANDOLES •

It is worth looking for pairs of these ornamental wall candleholders as they are very collectable and hold their value very well, but even a single one can look most effective if placed at the end of a hall, in a small cloakroom or in a niche or archway. They were made in many styles and materials. The most sought after are those in Rococo style in ormolu or giltwood. The Victorians commonly framed their mirrors with velvet, which can look most effective if tied in with the overall colour scheme. Other girandoles have relief pictures in bronze, brass or copper as the backplate. Use the mirrored candleholders



Regency ormolu two-arm candle sconce with classical relief picture.  
£150-£400



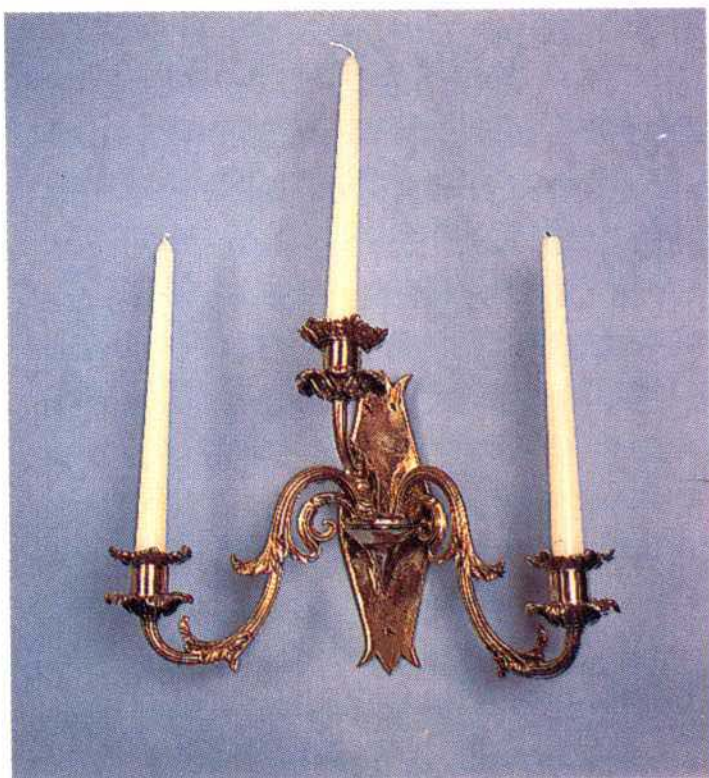
Art Nouveau repoussé brass two-light candle sconce. This sconce is over 2ft high.



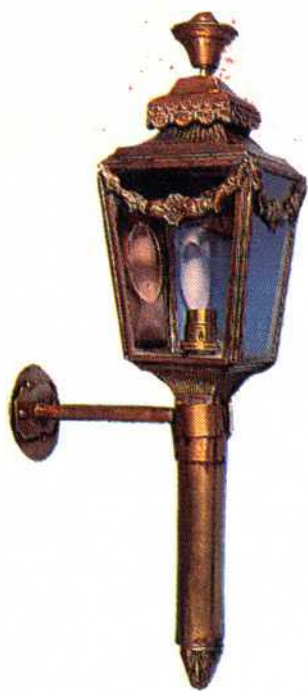
# wall

18th-century brass three-arm candle sconce.

£150-£350



wherever the candlelight needs to be maximised. A pair on one wall of the dining room gives gentle flattering reflections when dining by candlelight. Wall sconces for candles are becoming very popular for dining rooms. In a small room, the candles will give background heating as well as a warm, friendly ambience, and leave the table clear for all the gourmet goodies.



One of a pair of Victorian brass carriage lamps, now converted to electricity. Note decorative brass swags across the glass panes. Pair £295-£400

## • CARRIAGE • • LAMPS •

Candles were also used in carriage lamps. Old brass carriage lamps are in great demand today for use as outside lights. It is far more difficult to find pairs of these than the odd single one. Usually they have been converted to electricity; very few people use them with candles except on boats and yachts, but they add a grand touch placed either side of the front door, entrance gates, or in a porch. Carriage lamps were also made in cast iron and other metals. They can look effective when used for lighting halls, passages and stairways.

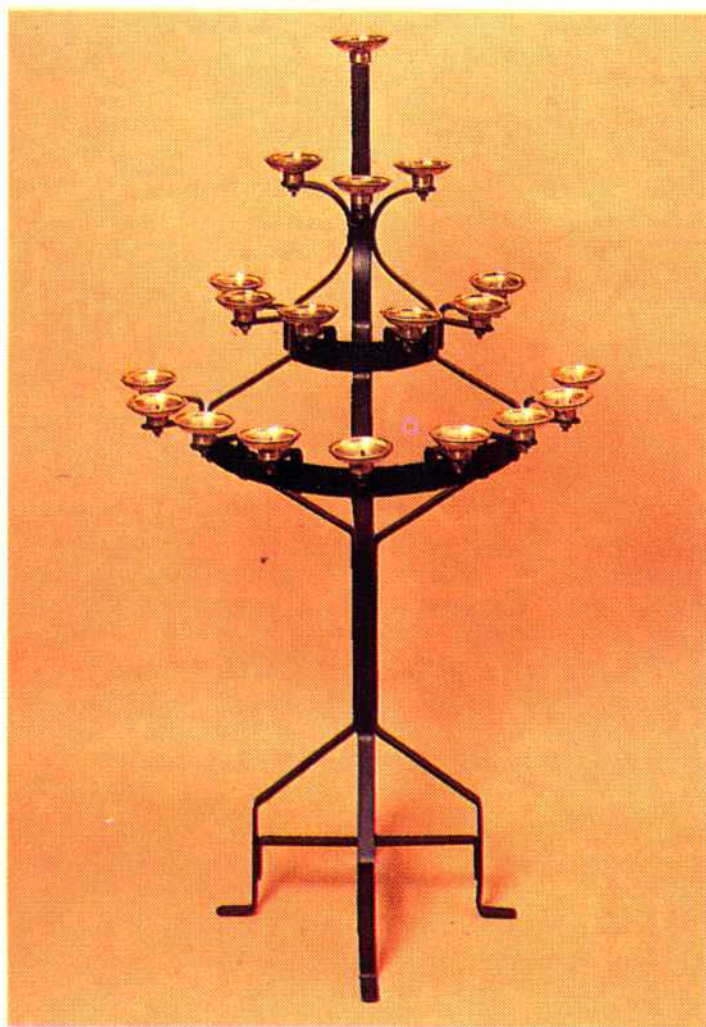


## • TORCHÈRES •

Candles were also displayed on floor-standing constructions – the forerunners of our standard lamps. The earliest examples were made of iron or wood.

They could be for one or two candles or as many as 18 or 20, usually arranged in a row, circle or stepped sequence. From the 17th to the 19th century very elaborate torchères were made in carved giltwood, bronze and ormolu which were mounted on large marble plinths.

Torchères most frequently found in antique shops are those made of iron or iron and wood, which were originally used in churches and chapels. These can still be purchased fairly reasonably and look stunning in barn conversions and Elizabethan houses, but they can also be used effectively in reception halls, dining rooms, kitchens and conservatories. The best torchères for practical use are the heaviest as they cannot be knocked over.



Ecclesiastical iron floor candelabra with brass nozzles and cups for 18 candles. Early 20th century. £550-£750





Sheffield plate candlestick lamp with Arctic fitting and hallmarked silver filigree Goram candle shade.  
£100-£200

## • CANDLESTICK • • LAMPS •

From 1770 a candlestick lamp was manufactured which was adapted from a bedroom candlestick to provide a lamp which would give a steady flame, even in draughty places. It had a metal base of silver, brass or bronze and a high glass funnel which slotted into the base. The metal body below the funnel was pierced to create an upward draught of air. Sometimes these candle lamps had glass globes instead of funnels to protect the flame. The candle was often enclosed in a spring device to keep it at the same height as it burned. This fitment was adapted to wall candleholders for railway carriages.

## • STUDENT • • LAMPS •

Scholars who studied by candlelight often used a screen attached to the candle to protect their eyes from the brightness of the flickering flame, without obstructing the light on the page of their book. These screens were called candleshields and were commonly made of a reflective material to maximise the available light. The first candleshield was patented in 1817.

A form of student lamp appeared in the 18th century which became so popular that it remained in use until Edwardian times. It was a metal candle lamp with a hooded metal reflector which concentrated the light on the books being read. The candle was spring-loaded in a metal tube, so that it remained at the same height even though the wax melted away as it burned. By 1913 this lamp was so successful that a cheap version in nickel plate, called the Holborn Candle



Victorian brass spring-loaded Student lamp with hooded metal reflector. This style first appeared in the 18th century and remained popular until the early 20th century.