

Actually looking.

'Isn't the sea blue today.'

'Turn round, look at it again, then come back and tell me!' – the instructions of my godfather, Ken New: respected artist, and teacher at the Slade.

During my childhood the Macdonald family would occasionally venture North of the border, to stay with an Aunt and Uncle. I remember that I used to anticipate looking at an L.N.E.R. guard's lamp, which stood on their hearth.

Years later, when the aforementioned Aunt and Uncle decided to retire to Spalding, sundry household items became superfluous, one of them, the lamp. I was awarded this item. Then 21, now 69, I have owned this lamp for 48 years - about twice as long as the L.N.E.R. did.

Lockdown continues to mean that I spend much time in my workshop. A couple of weeks ago, I decided to make a 1/8scale model of the L.N.E.R. hand lamp. I measured it up and made a start. The further I went into this project, the more I realised that although I regularly cleaned or dusted this much-cherished lamp, I had only ever looked at it in a superficial fashion.

Having made the tube that forms the body, I turned my attention to putting a base on it. On inspecting the underside of the original lamp I found that there were three feet in the form of pressed blisters. Between each pair of feet was a regular pattern of holes, presumably to admit air so that the paraffin flame could be fed with oxygen. HRUMPH! In 48 years, I had never noticed this arrangement.

I dutifully copied what I saw, and transferred my attention to the hinged plate that houses the lens, to find that the hinges securing the plate to the body were not, as I assumed, tubular, but made in the form of a running ribbon which is soldered to the body, passes through a slit in the lens plate and returns to the body, where it is soldered on top of its tail. In 48 years of ownership, cleaning and polishing I had never noticed that!

Surprisingly I did know how the catch worked - so that was O.K.

For those who don't know, railway hand lamps can show Red, Green, and Yellow lights, courtesy of a revolvable top portion which has a red glass, a blue glass and a clear aspect. My lamp has x2 clear portions, plus a red glass and a blue glass. That makes four segments - I never knew that!

(In my defence, some lamps have only 3 segments!)

My journey of discovery continued with each feature that I made, culminating with the fact that the picrust top opens. I NEVER KNEW THAT!! This was getting repetitive and demoralising!

If nothing else, this project has taught me to LOOK MORE CAREFULLY, especially at an object owned for around 48 years!

Pictures Below

Alan Macdonald.





