

## One Man's Obsession - a Lifetime of Gas Lighting

Maurice Wilkinson must be one of a very small number of people who still live in a house with fully functional gas lighting! What is more, until relatively recently, the house was a hotel. Yes, a gas lit hotel! I first stayed there 25 years ago and when I heard recently that Maurice was selling one half of the building and that all the gas lighting would be removed I asked if I could make a photographic record before the event.

Maurice is a mine of information on gas lighting. He was a regular visitor to the Westminster works of William Sugg & Co and in our time as Sugg Lighting in Crawley he used to call and see us when he needed a few bits and pieces to keep his system on top form or even add to it. His main living room has no less than 5 gas lights, consisting of 2 twin candle wall brackets, two table lamps and a two arm pendant, the latter from Sugg Lighting. The pendant is not on view in this picture.



The right hand table lamp has a 2 lt burner with a delightful opal fringed shade and the twin candle lamps have permanent pilot ignition.



Although the house was built in the era of gas light, the fixtures have all been installed by Maurice assisted by his installer in more recent times. There are many 30's style chrome plated fixtures of which this 'spaceship' style, below, is a classic with permanent pilot and switched remotely from beside the bed! Somewhat unromantically, they are in fact simply G89837, part of the Pool-Light Series made by Veritas.



Very often it is glassware that really sets off gas fixtures and this is the one element that is frequently broken or missing. And when you want a pair it is even rarer. This fixture, below, is one of a complete pair with lever cock and permanent pilot.



The adaptation of older, often originally upright open flame fixtures, is another common alteration used to make the earlier fixture more suited to the level of illumination achieved by the later fixtures. Maurice has a lovely pair of Victorian swivel arm wall brackets onto which he grafted an inverted No.3 burner with pilot and lever cock using a bend we made for him at Sugg Lighting. These two flank the dining room fireplace in which as you can see there is a splendid ancient gas fire.





Of course Maurice also has some great original fixtures of which the handsome cast brass wall bracket below is an example. One of a pair again, this fixture has a 3 lt inverted burner providing good illumination in the hallway. He says it is a Sugg 'flambeau' fixture! I don't have this particular one in a catalogue.





He also has a great collection of the 1930's chrome plated fixtures such as the bijou wall bracket below on the right. The Sugg 'Empire' burner pendant below lights the single bathroom.

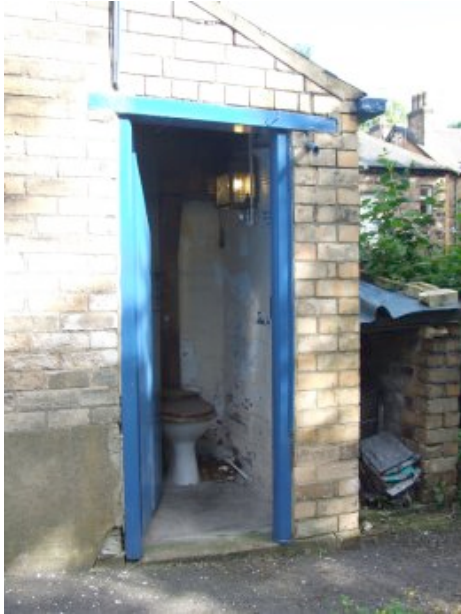


In the kitchen is a simple reflector pendant and beyond in the utility room is a 3 lt Sugg 'Corridor' lamp. Maurice says he has a spare glass for this one!





Outside, as you might imagine, are several fixtures. The first I photographed is actually in the outside privy! This is a Sugg Lighting L200 box light which we designed after the 3 day week as a 'modern' fixture for applications where electricity was not available. This one is on remote control from the kitchen so you don't have to stumble around in the dark en route! Of course Maurice had to have a 6lt Sugg Rochester, also remotely switched, on the rear corner of the building overlooking the back yard with its triple garage full of gas lamp bits and pieces collected over a lifetime to keep all the others going. The other corner has a 2lt Littleton with pilot and lever cock with extremely long chains!



At the front of the house Maurice has an early back lamp and a Sugg Lighting Globe with CCS remote control and at the bottom of the drive is a sign written Sugg Lighting 3 lt Grosvenor on a traditional 9ft cast iron post. This lamp replaced an earlier one with original William Sugg DCD control, the handwheel of which is however still neatly located in a recessed box by the front door.



The original system had to be pensioned off when Maurice could not find a replacement for the leather diaphragm in the DCD valve on the lamp. Now he has to walk down the drive and pull a chain. Somewhat retrograde!





So there we have it, a glimpse into a unique life style never to be repeated - or perhaps it will. I understand that all the fixtures from the half of the house being sold will go to another enthusiast who is ready to re-fit the fixtures in his own house down in the south east where he already has a collection of early gas fires. So maybe one day we can have another glimpse at life as it used to be?

Chris Sugg.