Members of the French Lamptérophile Club at a June 10th meeting. From L to R; Guy Gerard, Jean Claude Demarteleire, Michel Duval, Jean Pierre Menard, Paul Whiddett, & Robert Langlois. Most are also BTCA members.

Invincible Mfg. Co. brazing torch with a soldering iron holder. See page 5.

A great illustration of a Union Heater Supply Co. Paint Burner from an 1895 trade journal.
IN MEMORY

Mel Olson
November 13, 1918 – May 31, 2006

The Blow Torch Collectors Association lost a very avid member when Mel Olson recently passed away from cancer. He had collected over 1000 torches and they were all restored by him and neatly displayed. He relished telling how he went to farm auctions, antique malls, and most anywhere a torch could be hiding to find a new addition to his collection. His enthusiasm was wonderful and so contagious. He will be missed by all.

NEW MEMBERS

David Olson of Fergus Falls, MN, the son of Mel Olson, is taking over his dad’s BTCA membership. We understand that David will slowly liquidate Mel’s blow torch and soldering iron collection, mostly on eBay, the auction website.

NOTES FROM ALL OVER

Lloyd & Patti Weber vacationed in the Pacific Northwest in late May and took the opportunity to visit Mark Pedersen in Mill City, OR. We know that Lloyd enjoyed viewing Mark’s extensive torch collection, but we suspect that Lloyd was hoping to negotiate away a few of Mark’s rare pieces….like his Straub blow torch.

Michel Duval sent in photos of the same unknown torch that Graham Stubbs submitted, see newsletter #34, page 4. Michel’s torch is more complete and includes a small wood handle plus a tiny soldering iron…but still no idea regarding by whom or where the torch was manufactured. Can any member provide any additional information pertaining to this mystery torch?

We received a short note from Gerry Shackley regarding the A&A article in newsletter #34, page 3. The Shackley torch is not as complete as John Tingle’s torch, but they were also wondering what that small filler cap looking thing is on top of John’s fuel tank. John, can you please let us know if it is a fuel cap….or what? An interesting comment from Gerry suggests that they started their lamp collection by purchasing their first torch; a one-pint chrome plated Clayton & Lambert, during a scenic run in West Virginia.
On March 11th there was a blow lamp meeting in Belgium and **Marnik Van Insberghe** sent in a photo of two great looking lamps that he purchased at the meeting. The one with the three burner tubes is a Fouilloud; FG no. 4 and is very rare. The other lamp is a French Breuzin no. 4 with a wind protector.

We heard from **Brian Grainger** across the Big Pond in England. He sent in great photos of a Brand-It Self-Heating Soldering Iron/Blow Torch...trade name RED HOT, and a Wilcox Silver Plate Co. blow lamp. Brian is only one of two known owners of a Brand-It torch, and unfortunately we cannot determine the second owner. (If you are the member that previously sent us the Brand-It photo, then please contact us so we can update our file.)

What’s so unusual about the Wilcox blow lamp is its size...a very large fuel tank relative to its suspected function as a jeweler’s lamp. Brian estimates the fuel tank capacity at over ½ pint that would allow the device to burn for numerous hours without refilling. The lamp is fully silver plated and all parts appear original and in excellent condition.

There was a 3rd photo that Brian sent in along with an interesting story that we thought everyone would find amusing:

“The third torch is a strange item in many ways. As you can see, the fuel tank is made from copper, comprising four sections, top, corrugated side, inner base, and outer base rim...all neatly brazed together. The fuel tank is huge, with a total capacity of six pints, giving a working capacity of about 4½ pints. There are no identifying marks of any type, apart from the air pump cap which is stamped ‘PAT. MARCH 18 1902.’” (Editor’s note: the 1902 US patent was assigned to Clayton & Lambert for an air pump design.)
“The history of this torch may be of some interest to you. When I acquired it, the entire fuel tank was completely covered in a thick black bituminous-type substance that had aged to a rock-hard finish. None of my normal cleaning solutions would touch it, so I had to resort to chipping it away. This took several days of hard work, and not knowing what was underneath, I had to be extremely careful.”

“Having removed the black substance, I was then amazed to find that every brazed joint (top to side joint, both bottom joints, and the vertical side joint) were covered in a thick layer of solder. I was reluctant to use any form of heat to remove the excess solder, fearing that the whole thing might fall to pieces! So, another long period of time was spent gently removing the solder with a small sharp chisel. The presence of so much solder suggests joint failure in many places, and I wonder whether the pure size and pressure in the fuel tank, coupled with the soft copper material, resulted in it being a non-starter? In any event… I think this torch qualifies for the longest restoration time I have ever taken on any torch!”

Tim Szabo sent in a CD of many torch photos…one in particular that we’ve not seen before is a torch from the American Hardware & Supply Co. of Pittsburgh, PA. American Hardware was one of many distributors of Clayton & Lambert blow torches. The model shown is a C&L no. 800, but with an American Hardware decal, plus the company’s name was also stamped into the fuel tank on the opposite side. I guess they did not want any question as to what company distributed the torch!

Tim’s 80-year old stepfather took the photos since Tim doesn’t own a camera….nor does Tim have a cell phone, no computer, gets only 2 TV channels, and heats with firewood. But he does have a well-equipped machine shop, owns motorcycles, is building a 7½ gauge railroad, and a live steam locomotive!

Our sister group, the French Lamptérophile Club, had a meeting on June 10th in Nevers, France….260K south of Paris. Thirty members gathered to display their collections with many lamps sold and exchanged. Guy Gerard sent in photos, including one of the French Club members; most are BTCA members.

Tim Szabo’s American Hardware blow torch
We heard from Vicky Teeters regarding a Lenk no. 50 Master blow torch that she acquired not long ago. What’s so interesting is the torch has a complete label with all patent information and operating instructions.

Vicky also mentioned that she recently burned her arm on a defective steam cleaner. Since everyone at her work knows she collects blow torches….they all assumed that she burned herself with a blow torch!

Dave Kolb responded to the CEDARBERG article in issue no. 34, page 11, with photos of his own Cedarberg Mfg. Co. firepot. The firepot looks a bit different from the one in the previous article, and may be a later version of the same product. Note the air pump stowed in clips on the handle.

The instructions in Dave’s firepot indicate that kerosene is the fuel of choice. We suspect that this firepot was used to heat crucibles of solder or other materials.

Of greater interest is a photo Dave also sent in of a Clayton & Lambert no. 15 firepot. It appears to be in excellent condition and has been nicely refinished.

The firepot has patented dual burners and each could be used as a blow torch.

INVINCIBLE REVISITED

Thanks to Charles’ continued research effort additional information has surfaced on the Invincible Mfg. Co. of Wilmington, IL. We ran a complete story on the company and its many torch related products in issue no. 33, page 11. In the previous article there was a soldering iron holder illustration shown, however, there were no illustrations showing how the iron holder was utilized, nor were there any torch illustrations with the iron holder mounted.

While perusing through American Artisan trade journals from 1896 & 1897, Charles uncovered just what we’ve been looking for….a mounted soldering iron holder!
The holder appears to be a cast metal piece that is attached to the lower portion of the fuel tube, and provides forward and rear support for one or two soldering irons.

**Victor and Robert’s Patented Alcohol Torches**

Thanks to Graham Stubbs’ recent observations while working on “The Book”, another torch mystery may have been solved.

The Roberts patented alcohol torch, shown in the photo on the left, closely resembles the “Victor” torch shown to its right. The fuel tanks are the same size, and the wick holders, wick snuffer-caps, chains and chain holders are almost identical.

Other interesting information in the articles includes a listing of the trades that utilized the Invincible blow torch. The list includes who you would expect…plumbers, linemen, machinists, and tinters. However, dentists and jewelers are also listed….somewhat of a surprise considering the size of the torch and the amount of heat generated by the burner that could easily fuse brass or copper.

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Invincible soldering iron holder

Invincible blow torch with mounted soldering iron holder. Illustration from American Artisan trade journal

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Invincible soldering iron holder

Invincible blow torch with mounted soldering iron holder. Illustration from American Artisan trade journal

Roberts on the left, Victor on the right Photo by Graham Stubbs

The Roberts torch carries the marking “ROBERTS PATENT JUNE 13, 1899 and the torch incorporates the improvements claimed in the patent no. 626,723.

The Victor torch is marked only “VICTOR ALCOHOL TORCH PATENTED”. The “Victor” torch appears to be based on the Taylor brothers’ patent of 1895, no. 542,451, differing from the patented torch only in the means of stabilizing the upper part of the air tube.

Both Roberts and the Taylor are shown on the patents as living in Philadelphia at the time the patents were issued. It appears that both torches were made in the same shop, the Roberts torch being an improvement and simplification over the “Victor” torch.
Blowtorch

Flame in a can
can unsettle.
It lights with a pop,
rifles the air
with its colors.
A frayed and
withering exhalation
to melt apart
and meld. To scarify,
form a harsh repellent
surface: ridges, pocks, tiny
moonscapes, gullies
for solder. To seal
the conduit—gas line,
water line—
one smooth
jointed tube directing
the flow. You can
hold this conduit
in your hand, feel
its pressured hiss.
If a tool
is a limb extended,
this one sets fire
at your fingertips.
Its promise
is destruction
focused. It mars
to build or mend.
Fit into your plans
it waits on the workbench
like a humming
kettle. Tipped over
it will sing.
From the mouth,
tongues flared and
brilliant as the insides
of lilies. Behind them
a wafer
of invisible gas.

By Don Bogen
From The Courtland Review,
Issue 5, November 1998

Pat Smith, Charles’ wife, was messing
around on the computer and for some unknown
reason typed in the Google search engine
"blowtorch poem". Can you believe, up popped
a actual blow torch poem! If you go to
http://www.cortlandreview.com/issuefive/bogen5.htm
and click on the little “real audio” icon just
to the right of the title, you can follow along as the
author, Don Bogen, reads his poem. Charles
contacted Don and he is thrilled that we are
sharing his poem with our members. Don asked
that we retain the format; the short 3-4 word
sentences in a long column, commonly referred
to as free verse. And remember…not all poems
rhyme.

He is published extensively; Don Bogen's
The Known World, appeared from Wesleyan in
1997, and recently, he has been published in
Slate, Salmagundi and DoubleTake. His recent
success was a book of poems titled LUSTER,
and was published by Wesleyan in 2003. Don is
an English Professor at the University of
Cincinnati.

THE BOOK

The staff at BTCA, including Graham
Stubbs, Charles Smith, and Ron Carr is
moving along well with the task of creating a
comprehensive reference book covering all
known US & Canadian manufacturers of blow
torches and blow torch-related items. Included
will be blow and brazing torches, self-heating
soldering irons, firepots and furnaces, and a few
illumination torches.

The book will be similar in style to the
many indexes that Graham has created in the
past for the major US manufacturers…such as
Turner, Otto Bernz, and Clayton & Lambert. We
intend to provide illustrations, extracted from
catalogs and industry trade periodicals, for all
known torches and related items, supplemented
with photos from BTCA members. Included with
each manufacturer or distributor will be historical
information which we have accumulated. A
comprehensive index will list and cross
reference all known makers, brands, model
numbers and trade names and a rating system
will help the reader to determine the rarity of
most torches.

The publication will extend to more than
four hundred pages, covering more than three
hundred makers and/or brand names, and it will
include illustrations of over a thousand torches
and more than two hundred and fifty firepots or
furnaces.
We will have a rough draft ready for review at the BTCA September 30th meeting in Brooks, OR, and attendees will have time to look it over and are welcome to provide comments. We will most likely self-publish the book and plan to have it available for sale in late 2006 or early 2007. Many thanks to those members that have already submitted requested torch photos.

A rare Decker & Gries aluminum blow torch
This is one of the many photos that were sent in by BTCA members
Photo courtesy of George Murray

Jim Dandy Brand

The "Jim Dandy" brand name is most closely identified with Modern Metal Products Inc. of Cambridge, MA. However, the "Jim Dandy" name was also used by at least two other companies for small alcohol torches.

Modern Metal Products offered at least six models of "Jim Dandy" alcohol torches. Model nos. 80, 675-B, 250-B and 300-B are shown in the photo.

The name Reco Mfg. Co. of New Britain, CT appears on the two "Jim Dandy" alcohol torches pictured below. The first one is a Reco Co. no. 80, and other than the printed name, is identical to the no. 80 torch from Modern Metal Products in every respect including the cardboard container and the operating instructions. The second photo is a flat tank alcohol torch with a lime green handle, and the fuel tank is stamped "Jim Dandy", Mfg’d by Reco Mfg. Co.
The name Lasher-Weeber Co. appears on the flat alcohol torch pictured below. This has a black handle, together with the trade name “Jim Dandy”. You’ll note the many similarities to the Reco torch pictured above.

We held our meeting twice before at the same facility, however, we’ll be located in the Hiland Bldg. on this occasion. The Hiland Bldg. houses many vintage “one-lung” engines…an appropriate location for our torch displays since many of the one-cycle engines utilized blow torches for starting.

Motor homes are allowed on the grounds for all of you motor-homers, and ample parking is available just adjacent to the Hiland Bldg. Mark has suggested that members bring any spare parts they may want to trade, sell, or give away. Also, a few torches will be given away in a fun free raffle.

See the attached details and entry forms for attendance. Please be prompt in returning your form and payment so we can make the appropriate arrangements for attendance. We hope to see many of you at our meeting as we have in the past.

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**BTCA 9TH ANNUAL MEETING**

We’re off and running for the 9th Annual BTCA meeting in Brooks, Oregon. Mark Pedersen has made arrangements at the Antique Powerland Museum in Brooks for Saturday, September 30th, and Noma Jernstedt is arranging the caterer.

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**ILLINOIS STREET GAS CO.**

A single article in the American Artisan trade journal uncovered by Charles gives us another new name in the US blow torch world. A September 1886 article was in response to a reader that asked where they could purchase a paint burner in Chicago. The response was the Illinois Street Gas Co. of Chicago, IL.

The company supplied a no. 26 blow pipe for burning paint, and the device could also be used for soldering, brazing, and other shop uses. It was made of brass, weighed three pounds, and was listed at $8. Unfortunately there was no illustration of the torch. There’s no indication that the company was a manufacturer, or was merely a distributor for others. Anyone owning an Illinois Co. torch will have a real winner since we would consider it quite rare.

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**Scovill**

Thanks to Graham Stubbs, another blow torch mystery has been solved.

The unknown torch pictured on page 3 of issue number 34 of “The Torch” is almost certainly a Scovill torch.
The clean-out wire in the base is identical to that found in other known Scovill torches. The use of a small sheet metal pre-heating cup closely resembles those found on Scovill torches.

The Turner Model T-15 T Blow Torch

By Graham Stubbs

“According to the sales slip, the Turner Co. of Sycamore, IL sold the brass torch featured in the photo on September 10th, 1980. At first glance, this seemed to me to be unlikely, because I thought that Turner stopped making and selling liquid fueled blow torches in the 1960s. What’s more, the style of this brass torch looked more like the 1920s. With the torch was a sales slip, its original box, an instruction brochure describing the T-15 as a CHAMPION BRAND product, a page from a Turner catalog, and a spare burner orifice with the necessary tools for changing it. By 1980, Turner Brass Works had become the Turner Co., Division of Cleanweld Products Inc., still located in Sycamore, IL.”

“A closer look at the torch revealed a plastic pump knob, and then it clicked! I had seen this torch before. On a shelf in my garage was an almost identical torch, which I purchased, brand new, in a hardware store in Taiwan, about 1984.”

“Even the valve knobs are exactly the same, as are most of the other details. The basic difference was that my Taiwanese torch has a metallic logo all in Chinese characters. It was obvious that both torches came from the same place.”
“My best guess is that Turner, having stopped making torches in the 1960s, found that there was a continuing local demand for them, and that Turner looked for a source in a country in which they were still being made and used”.

“From my own knowledge, blow torches were still being sold in the Far East into the 1980s. The designs, for which there was still a demand in Taiwan, were the type with brass tanks and external pumps, but with minor updates such as the plastic pump handle.”

“There is one more difference between the Turner T-15T torch and the Taiwanese torch. The burner on the Turner torch is embossed with the word “BUJI”. The Taiwanese torch has Chinese characters engraved on the burner. I know I’ve seen torches with the name “BUJI” on the burner; could they have been late model Turner torches missing their labels? Does anyone else have one of these torches with “BUJI” embossed on the burner? If yes, then please let us know.”

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Carleton “Spartan” and L.S. Brach ‘Solderall” Torches

In 1921, Francis B. Carleton of Boston, MA, was awarded U.S. patent no. 1,398,676 for an improvement to an alcohol torch.

His idea was to position a rectangular air tube close to the fuel reservoir by placing its broad dimension flat to the tank, and by positioning it in a groove running part of the way along the tank. As compared with the earlier Victor and Roberts torches, the result was a more compact tool, with better protection of the fragile air tube.

The Carleton Co. manufactured the torch as the “Spartan” alcohol torch, with an inscription “PAT APPL’D FOR”. The L.S. Brach Mfg. Corp. of Newark, NJ marketed the same torch, with the name the “Solderall” alcohol-blow torch, and with the Carleton’s patent no. 1,398,676 clearly marked.
For Sale....Mark Pedersen has approximately 100 torches for sale of different sizes and styles. Mark is downsizing his collection and would prefer to liquidate his duplicates. Contact Mark for specific details on available torches at 503-897-3101, or email to pedrleen@webtv.net.

Mike Jones is liquidating his entire collection, and he is in the process of cataloging about 200 torches that he would prefer to sell as one lot. If you’re interested in receiving a copy of the catalog, please drop him a line at idahojones@spro.net.

Classified Ads

For Sale....Andre LeFrancois has 38 completely restored blow torches available, mostly US, but some European as well. Included are 5 unrestored torches and many miscellaneous parts. For those that are not familiar with Andre’s refinished torches...they are highly polished and in pristine condition. It appears that Andre is getting out of blow torches and is now building and selling customized Segways. He would prefer to sell his torch collection to one buyer.....if interested, you can reach him at 510-886-1478.