

AN INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH PEWTER CANDLESTICKS

**With information regarding candles, candle making, wax candles and tallow candles,
and rush lights**

With quotes, illustrations, sections, taken, borrowed with permission, plagiarised, from various articles and books including - the Journal of The Pewter Society volume 14 Autumn 2000 pages 17 -41 by Jan Gadd – Old Domestic Base-metal CANDLESTICKS by Ronald F Michaelis (Published Antique Collectors' Club 5 Church Street Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 1DS UK. ISBN 0 902028 27 8) – Medieval Candlesticks of the Bunsen Burner Style by David Moulson – Journal of the Pewter Society Volume 19 Spring 2003 pages 2-6, Bell Candlesticks by A S Law Journal of The Pewter Society Vol. 5 no 2 Autumn 1985 an article by K G Gordon in vol. 3 no2 of The Journal of The Pewter Society dated Autumn 1981 pages 46 to 52 and Pewter – The Candlestick Maker's Bawle 'A family Portrait' a book by Kenneth G Gordon ISBN 0 7074 0243 3. Pewter Wares from Sheffield by Jack L Scott entitled ISBN 0-937864-00-5

These references are given here in the hope that this will encourage the reader to take a greater interest in the subject and look at and read the sources quoted, and that any early English pewter Candlesticks seen, will be looked at with greater interest, a little understanding, and with some clues as to where might be found more and better information.

**The Golden Age for the English Pewter Candlestick was likely the period
from 1625 to 1700 and especially the latter half of the 1600s.**

Candlestick styles from the 1600s are very apparent - but not from the 1700s. In the 1800s there are very many Britannia metal Candlesticks. So what happened in the 1700s? Or as one collector wrote -

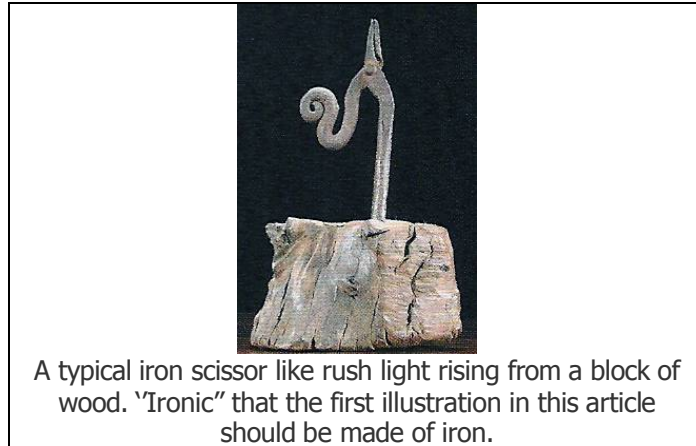
There are more known 17th century English pewter candlesticks than 18th century ones. Why? It can't be because pewter candlesticks died out because there are masses of 19th century ones

Perhaps Ronald F Michaelis answers this in part right at the beginning of his book on –
' Old Domestic Base Metal Candlesticks'

Here he says that effectively 'rush lights took over - cheaper etc' - surely a period where available means were less for a while - and dictated what maker's made?

A response from the same collector -

Cross-checking this in "The Rushlight and Related Holders" by Robert Ashley - it all becomes clearer. It was the government's fault (as always). They introduced a tax on candles in 1709 - so everyone switched to rushlights! This candle tax forbade the making and use of home made candles and all materials connected with their making were thus hidden or destroyed.



BUT NOT ONLY THAT -

A further contributing matter might be - 'the revoking of the Monopolistic Mines Royal Act in 1689 and 1693 which quickly made copper cheaper and freely available – and benefitted the brass founders too, much to the detriment of manufacture and sales of pewter candlesticks during the 18th century" – transposed here from the text of an article in the Journal of The pewter Society volume 14 Autumn 2000 pages 17 -41 by Jan Gadd, quoted from in part here and elsewhere in this introduction to pewter Candlesticks.

AND ANOTHER -

Another development in 1700 – 1710 was the discovery of how to make cost effective moulds which was much to the detriment of those who produced by joining together multiple small components. This innovation is detailed in the later section entitled 'After 1725'.

These three circumstances came together in the early 1700s with a likely swing in fashion to brassware and were most certainly very unfavourable for Pewter Candlestick Makers.

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But perhaps we should start with a little about early candles.
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Candles - Wax and Tallow - and Wicks - and Rushlights

Candles are made of Wax or Tallow or both together.

Between 1313 – 1433 there was at the selling price - a 22 times multiple difference in the price of wax against that of tallow (say 11 old shillings to 6 old pence for a pound of candles).

In 1468 if tallow candle makers bought a pound of tallow for ½ penny he should sell it for 1 penny allowing ¼ penny for the wick and ¼ penny for his time.

Whereas wax chandlers (candle makers) sold candles for 2 shillings a pound (24 old pence) having paid 6 pence for the wax.

So wax candles not only cost more but sell for a far higher margin. This can perhaps only be the result of supply and demand.

Wax candles were used by the Church – the notion being – ‘bees came direct from paradise’.

Wax is the wax of bees.

Tallow is the rendering (boiling/heating) down of animal fat (oxen, deer, sheep) from the slaughter house. Tallow splutters gives off black smoke and is not kind to the eyes and nose. Being far cheaper and hence in greater demand and also used for soap - Russia for example supplied prodigious quantities in the late 1400s. Whereas Venice supplied (due to its trading network) untreated bees wax and beeswax candles to Europe.

Rushlights – the common soft rush found in moist pastures and under damp hedgerows by the sides of streams are best in the height of summer. Cut and soak them in water, eventually peel and produce a series of narrow strips from top to bottom, leave out on dewy nights and sun dry. Tallow is first scalded and strips dipped into it and into the remains of fat in the bacon pan (evidently a lot of that fat). 6 pounds of fat were used to a pound of rushes. A little added beeswax or ‘mutton suet’ made it cleaner to handle.

A holder different from a candlestick was needed – namely a scissor like iron grip holder arising from a block of wood.

Candle wicks were at best coarse cords of cotton (known as ‘cotton rovings’ – often imported from Turkey). Four or more skeins (lengths) are wound off cut to length doubled or twisted to leave a loop at one end. Candle wicks could be a problem if they charred as they burnt down leaving a black smouldering tail as this would give off a lot of unpleasant black smoke; hence small wick cutters were often available to trim the wick.

Coarse candles were made by dipping the wicks in molten tallow, rolling in the hands to twist the wick, set into a wooden frame and then dipped into a vat of hot tallow – the tallow sticking to the wick and then hot tallow sticking to cooler tallow. Moved over a tray to collect drips and allowed to harden, and repeated as needed to produce the weight of candle required.

Tallow Candles – moulded. Moulds could be pewter, brass or copper – made as a hollow cylinder the size of candle required and a metal cap with a hole for the wick. Set up in frame of eight or more in a trough. The wick is taken in along length through them. A wire rod drawn through the looping lower end to ensure the wick is central. The moulds are filled – when half full the top of the wick is pulled to ensure it is central and the moulds are filled. The candles are pulled out of the moulds by the top loop which is then cut off and the ends scraped flat. After storing for several months laid flat they became white enough to be sold.

Wax candles – not suitable for moulding as they would stick to the mould and also contract on cooling. So wicks which were cut to length are twisted warmed and attached to a ring of wood or metal suspended over a vat of molten beeswax which is ladled over the tops of the wicks and in running down the wax adheres to them. This is repeated until covered as required. Then rolled when hot with a flat piece of box wood on a smooth walnut table constantly wet - which makes them cylindrical.

Large Church Candles – made by placing a wick on a thick slab of wax whilst still warm and pliable and then folding this and rolling as before.

Improvements spread over a hundred years or more led to the use of ‘foreign oils’ and better methods of production – a continuous taper holder for example (whatever that was).

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THE CANDLESTICK TOP NOZZLE FLANGE

Remembering that early candlesticks in pewter were made to resemble silver then the top flange as a shiny surface helped increase the available light by reflecting the flame. So above the top flange the light was as good as it could reasonably be. But below it you would certainly have difficulty in ‘wrytying’ Thus for writing, carving, other purposes likely carried out on or below table surface level and requiring some accuracy it was better that there was no flange. Indeed it is easy to see that lights suspended from a ceiling (if safe) would also work better without any flanges.

MEDIEVAL CANDLESTICKS OF THE BUNSEN BURNER STYLE.

An example of known English candlesticks used in the 1300s – 1400s.

This design is a simple socket on a stem, raised from a round low skirted base. The stem has a central disc (or perhaps rightly known as a discoid knob). This truly English form differs to the European by an absence of feet (or tripod) to the base and by having no lateral hole in the side of the socket to remove the candle. These were made in brass or pewter. Figure two is the earliest known dating from the 1300s – simple and unsophisticated it stands 4 ½” high.

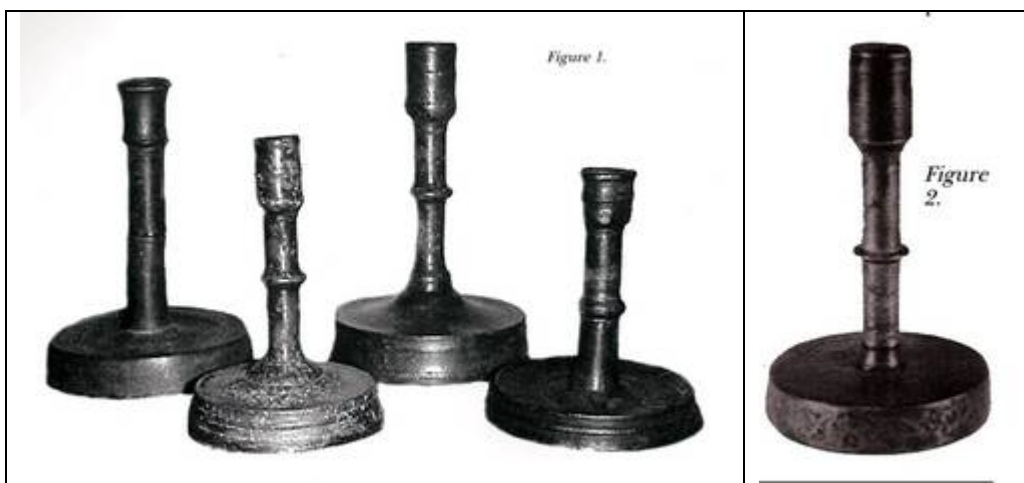


Figure 1 (right) shows a 4” stick excavated with 15th century remains, but it could be earlier. Stems and bases were likely cast separately. Figure 1 (left) is possibly the oldest being simple, having no embellishment, and rudimentary shaping only where a disc/knob would be (5 4/10” high). Figure 1 central 2 similar but one is 4 6/10” (from Wiltshire) and the other 6” (from the Welsh/English borders). These candlesticks have low tin to lead and copper (example – Wiltshire base 59% tin, 29% lead, 12% copper – stem 66/26/7). More lead than the Worshipful Company of Pewterers insisted on in 1348 – so these predated the ordinances, ignored them or were exempt as unconnected with food or drink.

FOUR EXPORTING PEWTERERS IN LONDON from perhaps 1660 TO 1720

Pewter Candlesticks of the Baroque Period

A selection of details from an article by Jan Gadd from *The Journal of The Pewter Society* Volume 14
Autumn 2000 pages 17 – 41

This concerns in large part the candlesticks made in London and exported to Scandinavian Churches

These four appear to have been closely related in business not least through the apprenticeship system.

<p>Francis Lea OP 2882 From 1664 to 1675, free by Patrimony in 1651, his father died in 1660 and his mother between 1662-1669. Both Richard Withebed and Benjamin Cooper were bound to him as apprentices.</p>	<p>Richard Withebed OP 5239 Apprenticed firstly to Francis Lea's mother Elizabeth he was free in 1669 and worked on his own account dying in 1683 Known for his Lady Fortune mark found on a Bank of Sweden Candlestick.</p>
<p>Hugh Quick OP 3806 Free in 1675 Master of the Company in 1708 died in 1725. Benjamin Cooper was turned over to him from Francis Lea in 1675 Known for his Maltese Cross mark struck on candlesticks in Oslo Churches and Museums</p>	<p>Benjamin Cooper OP1101 Apprenticed to Francis Lea and on his death to Hugh Quick. Free in 1677 struck his touch in 1679, had as apprentice John Trapp who did not strike his touch until 1720 perhaps after Cooper's retirement. Marks found on Candlesticks in Museum and Church in Oslo</p>

These pewterers produced Disc-base type Candlesticks (call it Type 1). These consisted of a disc type base rising a short distance to a drip tray in a trumpet like shape (but short). The stems were either cylinders or clusters stems all with a mid stem fillet or binding, slightly larger at the base than at the top. The lower disc base and the dip tray when round might have a rope type fine decoration to the edge of the tray and the lower raised section of the disc base. Within this area and the stem might be found on engraving celebrating the reason for the gift to the Church.

1665 – 1670 A sturdier composite moulding base (Type II) was introduced some with four sides and others Octagonal. The bases (many and varied) were assembled using small sections of mouldings or sheet pewter cut to size and soldered together then deburred and finished. Stems could be equally complex with baluster sections instead of the simpler binding fillets (indeed produced as two half sphere balusters and bound together with a fillet)

An endless range could be produced from a basic stock of small part moulds. Hugh Quick later produced simpler models for the mass market in perhaps the early 1700s.

Plain Rim Bases likely 1680-1720. (Type III) These plain lower rims could be a problem for stability if only slightly damaged (as with the disc type.) Hexagon or Octagonal bases were usual with strengthening strips soldered on underneath, Scallop cut bases are scarcer. Some bases have a grapevine floral band added likely applied to a recessed ring turned in to the base. The stems and drips trays could be simpler. The pillars often plain with decorative lines or fillets. Hugh Quicks candlesticks might have pronounced gadroon to the base.

The Early 1700s (Type IV) Economy 7" or less types. Drips trays disappeared or in the bases. Now cast in economic moulds. The technical development between 1700 and 1710 enabling the purchase of cost effective moulds was much to the detriment of those who produced by joining multiple small components.

The brass founders were taking over the candlestick business. By 1727 Hugh Quick is considered poor enough for the Guild to return to him his fines.

Determining Factors for design – as often firstly the market value that showed a profit, then the flexibility given by joining smaller components, rather than moulding.

This is but brief detail taken from Jan Gadd's article (Pewter Candlesticks of the Baroque Period in The Journal of The Pewter Society Volume 14 Autumn 2000 pages 17 – 41) and here follows a small selection of photographs illustrating these types of candlestick. An interested reader is urged to join the Pewter Society and take advantage of the sources of detailed information available.



Perhaps about 1650 – 1660
Unsatisfactory trumpet style base



Francis Lea about 1669
Disc Base Type I



RB touch (maybe Richard Booth
of York) Disc Type 1 Base
1661 - 1670



Francis Lea Type II 1665- 1670



Francis Lea Type II 1665 - 1670



Hugh Quick Type II 1678



Hugh Quick Type II Cluster
c1680



Hugh Quick Type III
Economy
1680-1700



Hugh Quick Type IV c1710



John Trapp Type IV likely after
1720



Hugh Quick Type IV sold May 2007 at Christies
for £5760..... c 1710? (said to be late 17th C)

EARLY ENGLISH CANDLESTICKS MADE OF PEWTER

Information regarding pre 1400 Candlesticks is very limited. For this article here are a few examples which may have relevance and those later show how the Pewter Candlestick develops.



Romano British Socket Candlestick excavated in Bath



A Medieval Pewter Twin Socket From a Candlestick late 1300s.



Figure 28.

Excavated in London but might be Dutch as an identical example only 3" high is attributed as Dutch and dated to the 1200s



Figure 30.

Excavated in London perhaps postdating the "Bunsen Burner" type of the 1300s.



Excavated in London perhaps predating the "Bunsen Burner" type of the 1300s this is a little more primitive than the one preceding it above.



A Very Rare Low Bell-Based Pewter Candlestick circa 1550 sold in the Little sale at Christies in 2007 for £22800



A rare English Pewter High-Bell Candlestick circa 1600-1620 sold at Christies in the Little Sale in 2007 for £19200.



This is not Pewter but Brass said to be Coptic of the 4th – 5th Century and is here simply to show how candlesticks developed.

Dating Bell Candlesticks.

In the assay of 1612 Great Bell weighed 3 ½ pounds a pair and low bell 2lbs a pair.

In the assay of 1674 Great Bell are said to weigh 2 ¼ pounds the pair and Low Bell 1 ½ pounds the pair

This should allow some loose idea on weighing such a candlestick as to the date it was made for the avoidance of giving to early a date to the lighter weight.

Taken from Bell Candlesticks by A S Law Journal of The Pewter Society Vol. 5 no 2 Autumn 1985

We know that after the Romans left England the land descended into anarchy with many small kingdoms continuously at war until William the Conqueror sorted them out. I can find no English candlesticks in Pewter (or of anything else, attributed to that period, and welcome any contributions from, those better informed.)

A VERY ENGLISH PEWTER CANDLESTICK – THE BALL-KNOP

From an article by K G Gordon in vol. 3 no2 of The Journal of The Pewter Society dated Autumn 1981 pages 46 to 52 and Pewter – The Candlestick Maker's Bawle 'A family Portrait' a book by Kenneth G Gordon ISBN 0 7074 0243 3. This article purports only to give snatches of the extensive information on this subject provided in this 122 page book of which nearly half is given to good full page photographs.

Silver experts report that there is nothing to indicate that the Ball-Knop Candlestick was ever made in that metal. They are very difficult to date as so few bear any maker's marks and those that do are usually un-attributable. Contemporary artworks rarely depict the style. Usually those cataloguing them place them in the c1680/1690 period due to lack of confirming information and that being perhaps the golden age for pewter candlesticks.

There are 'Candlesticks with Bawles' first mentioned in the Worshipful Company's records of 1612/1613 where five types are identified by weight and description. Wording suggests they were an innovation then. However in suggesting a date of say 1610 we do know that ball-knopped drinking glasses date from the late 1500s and may well have provided the inspiration for these candlesticks.

It would be reasonable to date the earliest piece known as the plain ball-knop shown firstly below. This has a detachable nozzle and wide flange. It is simply made. There are two shallow fillets on the upper stem. This is likely of the Charles I period. Stems without ridges or fillets might be thought to be a later style. Tops without flanges are found as eave-shaped or with a curled or rolled top. The detachable nozzle was known as

a 'prolonger' and it is thought that the rolled top would have been the flange so rolled to allow more light for 'wryeting' as before mentioned.



Probably the earliest Ball Knop known
 Might have been made by a Robert Crimpe working
 on his own from 1636 to 1642
 Height 8 ½ inches Base diameter 7 1/5" weight 1 lb
 11 ozs. It is thought that the Ball Knop effectively
 insulated the hand (when held below) from the heat
 and made carrying the candlestick safer and easier.



The same stick again showing the sconce (top flange
 and insert) by the side and just visible the three
 makers' hall marks shown on top of the sconce.
 Robert Crimpe was apprenticed to Gabriel Butcher
 one of the 12 'Certain Tryflers' chosen for the assay
 of 1612-13 where Candlesticks with Bawles are first
 mentioned.



Perhaps of similar age to that above. The plain Ball,
 double impressed lines above and below, stem
 recessed into pedestal, but this may have had beaded
 decoration to the base. This is a fixed flange rather
 than a sconce.



The makers mark to the flange – a fleur de lys and
 letters PS in a diamond. This is 5 ¾" tall a base
 diameter of 5 ¼" and weighs 9 ½ ounces.

In this style the knop was a decorative holder only. Gadrooning to the upper part of the ball knop and on the base – and this was coarse when found on known drinking vessels of 1650 becoming finer later and ceasing in about 1715, it would reasonable to think the same changes would have applied to the candlestick. There is no evidence of ball-knop candlesticks being made after 1715. So perhaps they could be dated as to 1610 to 1715. We read above of the difficulties pewter candlestick makers were experiencing by that date.

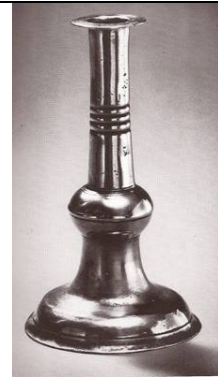
The trumpet type base was also used on Patens (a footed plate) certainly by E Fairbrother in 1723. A 'Tryffeler was a maker of smaller hollowware items – 'tryffles' (see Welsh's History). An analysis found one made of 82 parts tin and 18 parts antimony – giving strength and a silver like appearance.



Height 6 1/2", base diameter 3 15/16ths" Octangular base, no recess rising in a plinth flange 3/4" weighing 10 ounces



Height 6 5/16" base 4", weight 9 ounces. Note fillet now to the Ball but no upper stem fillets, base recessed drip pan with circular outer mound as protection. Thought of as being made in Bristol due to where and with other found.



Height 7 1/8" base 4 1/8" weight 9 3/5 ounces. Triple fillets and no recess below the plinth showing individuality



Height – only 3 4/5", base 3" weight 7 ounces (7/10" nozzle indicates use for and as a candlestick – not a taperstick) The lowest section is an addition following repair and without it the stick would be 2 ozs lighter.



Height 6 1/2", octangular base 4 1/5", weight 10 3/4 ozs, Gadrooning as mentioned above, perhaps earlier than 1700 A makers mark lozenge shaped with perhaps a fleur de lys



Height 6 1/2", base 4 7/10" weight 12 ounces. Thought to be perhaps London made of the early 1700s. Might have been referred to in inventories as 'knurled'



Height 7 1/2" base diameter 4 5/8" weight 13 1/2 ounces (nozzle interior about 1") fine condition likely one of the last of this type made perhaps about 1725

Three Candlesticks sold at the Little Sale in May 2007



Lot 9

Perhaps c1680 - a reeded ball knob, makers initials to scone 'TM' and sold for £15,600 (7 1/2" tall) Octagonal base and cast band or raised rose and vine pattern.



Lot 82

A pair with wrythen ball knob and gadrooned base 6 3/8" high. A possible worn mark dated circa 1680 sold for £7800 the pair.



Lot 118

Round base and unusual ridged ball knob, 6" tall circa 1680 sold for £8400

With such high prices for good early examples with provenance those interested should watch out for certain practices intended to deceive.

Look out for any repairs; serious collectors do not want pieces that have been tinkered with.

A quick flick of the finger nail will produce a sound and given the metal content of most if not all ball knobs this should ring out and not be a leaden dull noise.

It was not difficult for a skilled faker in the early 1900s to find a trumpet style base and marry it to a candle stem but the sound or 'repair' work should alert the collector. There is also always the look of old pewter such oxidation on this type of pewter is difficult to match or even to get near. Too clean and you might be concerned, equally so if the oxidation is mottled as though 'splashed'.









AFTER 1725

The innovation in the first few years of the 1700s appears to have been a casting method where the column was cast vertically in two halves - these two halves fused together accurately (brass filings and caustic soda in brassware - heated until the filings melted and the two halves clamped together resulted in a weld like join). Finally it was trimmed on a lathe to hide the join. (The join can be detected by breathing on the column). - The column could be inserted in the foot and the hollow end piece hammered up by use of conical punch which expanded the outer edges of the tang (end piece of the lower column) to fit and hold. Then the iron candle ejector rod was easy to fit through the hollow column a button the size of the nozzle at the top end and a smaller button (larger though than the column entry point) to the base.

The 'Adam Style' Candlesticks in the Britannia Metal Sheffield Pewter were the fashion after 1775 (really the old French Pewter of James Taudin in the time of King Charles II which was after 1769 or so able to be rolled into sheets - but renamed in the cause of patriotism - yes, really, to make the sale!). And later towards 1800 a whole variety of columns commonplace in both brass and pewter.

Interestingly telescopic Candlesticks were fashionable in about 1795. In the first quarter of the 1800s gadroon edging became popular this was done by making the gadrooning in separate long strips and then soldering on the length needed in brassware and silver but actually cast into the design in Britannia Metal and not added separately (though you like I might wonder just how that was possible).

The very best book dealing with Britannia Metal is that by Jack L Scott entitled Pewter Wares from Sheffield ISBN 0-937864-00-5

 <p>Pewter Candlestick made using the new casting method of the early 1700s</p>	 <p>Pewter perhaps Britannia Metal 1780-1800</p>
 <p>Britannia metal Pewter style from 1830 – 1860</p>	 <p>Pewter Britannia Metal Telescopic Candlesticks about 1795</p>
 <p>Gadrooned edged 1800-1830 cast into the design in Britannia Metal</p>	 <p>A display of Pewter types (BM?) from 1775 - 1800</p>
 <p>Britannia Metal Pewter Styles from 1840 -1870</p>	 <p>Chambersticks by Philip Ashberry & Sons 1856-1860</p>

Britannia Metal Candlesticks has only a small following as a collectable and such candlesticks from the mid 1800s have been selling on eBay in late 2008 from £8 to £80 with prices commonly from £10-£20