



LOCKS & KEYS



Issue 10

The Newsletter for lock collectors

November 1999

Thanks for writing

As publisher, I am grateful for all those of you who have renewed your subscriptions. As Editor, I am gratified to have readers back again, and welcome new readers. Once again, I repeat that still three times as many subscribers are needed to be economic.

I do appreciate all your letters. This issue I have been fortunate to have a choice of material, and have tried to include as many small items as possible, though some have been held over. My apologies to those of you who have not heard from me for some time — I have been otherwise occupied during the summer.

I still would like items on your favourite locks, or keys. Several readers are interested in padlocks. Britain, as far as I know, does not have story locks, but many varieties of padlock have been made. Let's see some of them.

The item on privacy is included because of the close parallel with lock security and aspects of physical crime prevention.

I have not been able to look at the Net since before the last issue, so am unable to confirm the validity of any addresses in this issue. Please send me any corrections.

You've got mail - and everyone can read it!

Many readers will recognise the origin of the accompanying picture. It was chosen from a book of copyright-free clipart, in which the original lettering in the middle of the padlock had been removed. Users could, if desired, add lettering of their own. (PGP is the abbreviation for Pretty Good Privacy, a computer cipher (or encryption) program.)



Pretty
Good
Privacy

Whatever other benefits email offers, for most users, it is not private: it is like communicating in a glasshouse. For all but the most routine or trivial communications, snailmail users stick their mail in a private envelope.

At the end of August, Microsoft's email program Hotmail had to be closed for some hours, after hackers exposed millions of users' email to unauthorised view. Hotmail

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"Locks & Keys" needs many more subscribers. If you know any other collectors, please ask them to subscribe to their own copies!

"Locks & Keys" welcomes contributions, preferably with uncoloured illustrations on separate sheets. Unfortunately, colour photographs tend to be too dark to reproduce well. PC disks with files in Word2, Works3, Write, or saved as .rtf can be used.

You've got mail (continued from p.1)

is popular because it is free, and can be accessed from any computer on the Internet, even by travellers and those without their own computers. The incident sharply drew attention to the need for *users* to provide their own mail security. Britain's Home Secretary Jack Straw not only wishes to be able to intercept covertly our emails, but to have a 2 year jail sentence for anyone who discloses that his company's electronic communications are being intercepted by the government (this is aimed at Internet service providers).

The British government is ambivalent about secure encryption for computer communications. Government recognises that banning it, or even trying to discourage its use, would be both counter-productive and futile. Government politicians and officials would like to discourage it, and permit citizens only to use ciphers to which the government holds the key. This is the situation which President Clinton attempted, unsuccessfully, to create in America. Europe's, and Britain's, governments, would also like it. France was one of several countries which actually banned computer encryption, along with Iran and Iraq, but it was always difficult to enforce. What the views (if any) of Opposition parties' politicians are, is unclear.

Banning what the people have is futile

In Britain, the government tried to ban Citizen Band radio, because citizens were able to communicate without government control. But citizens who wanted CB radio took it and used it. The government eventually had to legalise it. Banning legal private ownership of handguns was done for political expediency to be seen to *do something*, in the wake of a bullfrogs' chorus of lies and disinformation in the gutter press. Whitehall officials, and even some politicians, fully understood that depriving law-abiding citizens of their right to own legal firearms was irrelevant, and did not tackle any actual problem in British society. It certainly did not deprive criminals of their guns. Any criminals who chose to own and use illegal pistols could, and have continued to do so. They simply no longer have the option of applying for police supervision and paying a licence fee. The police have even besought the help of former legal pistol shooters in the Dando murder enquiry!

Government wants your keys

The objection to secure encryption is that the police cannot read criminals' communications. Therefore the government must have the cipher keys! This is analogous to legislating that all citizens may only have secure burglar-proof locks if the police have the key, to

allow them, at will, to walk in at any time, covertly, in case you have stolen property, or are committing some other crime. The police-state mantra is: 'if you've nothing to hide, you've nothing to fear.' Most of us would regard such a situation as outrageous.

Who needs protection?

There are far more law-abiding citizens and businesses in need of protection from burglars than there are burglars/receivers/terrorists/drug dealers/etc. Some years ago, several banks had large losses when fraudsters obtained the telegraph codes then used for arranging international fund transfers¹. Today, electronic fund transfer, which includes the 'hole-in-the-wall' cash dispensers you use, and cashless till systems in your shops (e.g. Switch), rely on secure encryption for security. It will become even more important as Internet trading increases.

Modern computer ciphers are quite sophisticated, despite the pre-computer padlock logo. It behoves all email users to use a secure cipher, (PGP is a de facto standard), and to consider government demands carefully. And, perhaps, to change to Hushmail, an encrypted email service, at www.hushmail.com.

Can you trust the Government?

There have been far too many examples of 'democratic' governments depriving citizens of rights and freedoms, abusing their powers, violating their own laws, spying on their citizens, even attacking and murdering their own citizens! A recent British court judgment ruled that Government politicians may break election promises with impunity after they have been elected to Government on these promises. They are now *legally* as worthless as we always thought them.

Would you trust the Government with the keys to your home and business and safe?

¹ KNOWLES, Roderic, *How to rob banks without violence*. London, M Joseph, 1972 0 7181 1003 X.

☎ Telephone number changes

There will be new area codes and local numbers for London, Cardiff, Coventry, Portsmouth, Southampton and Ulster from 22nd April 2000. If you are affected, you will soon receive details.

For further details call FREEfone 0800731 0202 or www.numberchange.bt.com.

Remember to update your address records, phone memories, and stationery. **And your Editor.**

Singed feathers

The Phoenix appears as a trade mark on Milner safes and some locks. It is not always clearly stamped, and has sometimes been mistaken for

an eagle. There are various versions of the picture, some more detailed than others.

Following the article in the last issue on the Cornhill Robbery, the illustration shows a Milner Quadruple Patent safe escutcheon.

The safe door slides sideways to reveal the keyhole. The Phoenix holds in its beak a book, marked 212; the whole safe and bird is wreathed in flames. Holdfast was a term originally adopted by Milner for his banded safes; it later became a common industry term for such safes of any make.

The Phoenix is a fabulous Egyptian/Arabian/Indian/ etc. bird, the only one of its kind. According to Greek legend it was said to live a certain number of years, at the close of which it makes a nest of spices, sings a melodious dirge, flaps its wings to set fire to the pile, burns itself to ashes, and comes forth with new life. The idea probably comes from the habit of numerous birds, such as crows, of dancing through the glowing embers of bush fires with wings outstretched and flapping. This is done to smoke out ticks, fleas, and other parasites which infest most birds. In the most

elaborate representations, the bird is shown with wings spread, sitting in or surrounded by, flames.

Thomas Milner adopted the Phoenix as a suitable symbol for fireproof safes. He also made prominent use of the number 212. It appears on large round safe

plates, and is not part of the address. Sometimes the Phoenix holds in its beak a book marked 212. This is the temperature in degrees Fahrenheit (then the temperature scale in common use in Britain) at which water boils and turns to steam. Milner's fireproof compositions generated steam which filled his fireproof safes to prevent books and paper from burning in a fire. (The hot steam did, however, boil parchment documents to a blob of jelly, and melted wax seals. George Price seems to have been the only person to draw attention to this. His company sold steam-proof boxes to go inside fire-proof safes. The steam prevented burning, the box protected parchment from being boiled.)

At least one fire insurance company also adopted the

Phoenix as a symbol. The symbol is also now used by the Phoenix Safe Co. Ltd, Liverpool, which sells modern fire resisting cabinets, especially intended for the protection of magnetic and paper media. Modern fire protection relies on insulation, not a steam jacket.

R Phillips



Keyhole escutcheon from a Milner Quadruple Patent Fire Resisting Holdfast Safe

Houdini on video

The film noticed in Issue Number 8 as due for release in October 1998 was released on Warner rental video in July 1999. Does not achieving a general release say something about a film?

This film stars Jonathon Schaech as Houdini. At least the hunk looks the part, if a little tall. Which is really more than could be said for Tony Curtis (1953) and Paul Glaser (mid-70's tv movie). Biopics as a genre are generally bad. This film has an adequate supporting cast, and generally keeps to the facts.

Considering how well documented Houdini's life story is, the earlier films' blatant lies about history cannot be

forgiven as artistic licence. At least this latest film is honest with the end of Houdini's life.

Houdini performed the Chinese Water Torture Cell many times; he died of a gangrenous ruptured liver, after declining steadily for ten days in hospital. He had suffered an accident in his dressing room after a matinee show. This film is honest as far as it goes; but Houdini was at once too big to capture on film. And too meticulously painstaking to show viewers in any detail the work Houdini and his team put in behind the scenes. Nor Houdini's sheer personal physical stamina.

But I will watch it.

R. Phillips

Places of interest

Readers might like to be aware that the Science Museum's Locks & Fastenings Gallery is closed because of nearby building work, until July 2000. However, scholarly access can still be arranged on the following terms.

Two to three weeks' notice is essential, as there are no staff assigned to that duty. Viewing is usually at another site in London. Visitors may inspect either an object from a reserve store, or withdrawn from public display. Individual objects may be inspected in the presence of museum staff, one object only being unpacked at a time. Visitors are not allowed to handle any object. It is unlikely that more than, say, six items could be examined in the course of a visit. There is no charge for this service. Museum staff can help intending visitors select items for viewing; a list of photographs available for purchase can be supplied. The Science Museum, Exhibition Road, London SW7 2DD; ☎ 0171 938 8000, fax 0171 938 8118.

Although the staff are helpful, the regime is considerably less relaxed than that prevailing at many lesser museums, even the Royal Museums of Scotland. Visitors who equip themselves with clean white cotton gloves are sometimes viewed more favourably by museum curators.

There are also large collections of ornamental locks and keys, mainly Mediæval, but including many others, such as Roman, elsewhere in London. These include the Victoria & Albert Museum, the London Museum, and smaller collections in the British Museum, Guildhall, and Wallace Collection. Most museums have more items in stock than are displayed, and are happy to arrange for visitors to see them by appointment.

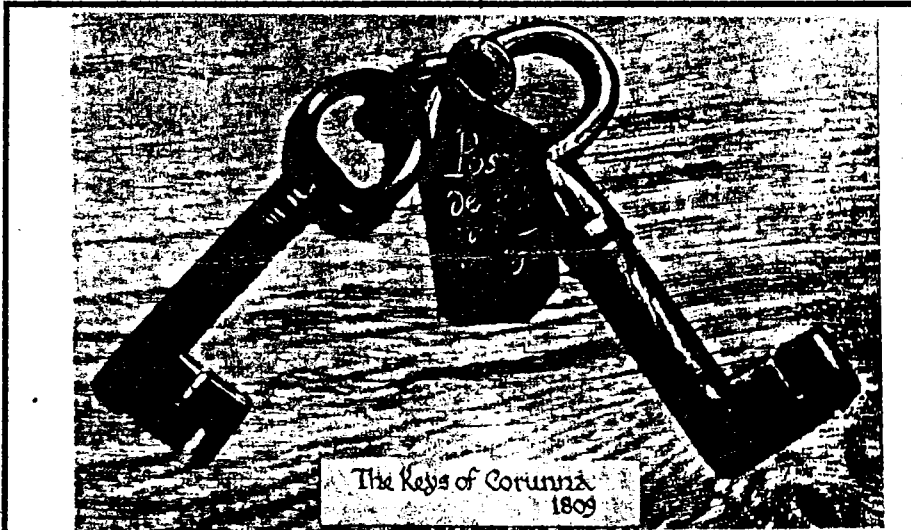
A small rural museum worth a visit if one is in the area is the Beck Isle Museum, Pickering. Run entirely by volunteers, it achieves highly professional standards, in all the areas of collection, documentation, conservation, and display. Anyone with a sense of nostalgia would enjoy the reconstructed ironmonger's shop, though it has to be admitted there are not many locks in it.

The Royal Welch Fusiliers Museum at Carnarvon, Gwynedd, would interest readers of the *Sharpe* novels by Bernard Cornwall — and others; see the picture below. Locking the town gates gained more time for the British army to withdraw to the ships in the harbour.

Not places, but of interest, were some television programmes which might be published as videos, or repeated. Fred Dibnah is well-known as a Victorian technology enthusiast¹. He has been on British television this summer presenting a series on industrial archaeology². Particularly interesting was his visit to the Blists Hill site of Ironbridge Gorge Museum — where the industrial revolution began. This site is the only place still producing new genuine wrought iron in Britain. He did not visit the locksmith's shop, but concentrated on ironmaking. Also this summer, Tony Robinson presented a series of Time Team archaeology investigations. One was to a site of a Tudor shipyard, earlier used for Roman ironsmelting. The programme recreated a small Roman blast furnace, and smelted a bloom in it, using only local materials. Tongs of green wood, and a mallet of green wood, were used to consolidate the bloom, on a tree stump.

Also on British television this autumn is a series on a modern family living in 1900 for 3 months. A London house in Greenwich has been meticulously restored to 1900 (apart from some television cameras)³.

A book brought to the Editor's attention, but not seen, is *Croner's practical premises security*. This is a 400 page loose-leaf manual, with 2 amend-ments annually and a 16 page monthly newsletter. The price is unknown, but believed to be into three figures! Details are available from Customer Services on ☎0181 247 1176. We would be pleased to hear from anyone who has used or even



ABOVE: The Keys of Corunna, 1809. After the Battle of Corunna and the death of Sir John Moore the town was evacuated by the British. Captain Thomas Lloyd Fletcher of the 23rd Royal Welch Fusiliers was in command of the rearguard. He and his corporal were the last to leave and as they passed through the gates Captain Fletcher turned to lock them. "The key not turning easily, they thrust in a bayonet and between them managed it." Captain Fletcher brought away the keys which are now in the Museum. The left hand key still bears the marks of the bayonet and is badly twisted.

seen this item.

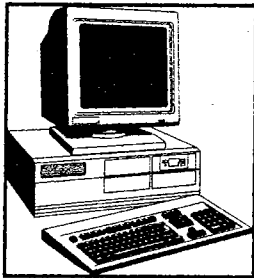
¹DIBNAH, F. *The Fred Dibnah story*. London, BBC, 1993, 1996.

² — *Fred Dibnah's industrial age: a guide to Britain's industrial heritage: where to go, what to see*. London, BBC, 1999. 0 563338482 4

³McCRUM, Mark, and STURGIS, Matthew, *1900 house*. London, Channel Four Books, 1999, 07522 17119 £19. R A Beck, Trevor Dowson, R Phillips

There are several Internet sites well worth a look. Paul Prescott has a well-presented selection from his collection, mostly British safe locks, on show in clear colour photographs. The locks have the covers removed.

A site showing padlocks, Jerry Clausen's <http://member.aol.com/jerry.clausen>. (This is the address of



Early Tech, a shop in Edinburgh, which is now solely a

shop in Edinburgh, which is now solely a details of their service which sells your items (whatever you wish to advertise) take up a whole page to describe. If you are on the Internet, and would like details, go to <http://www.earlytech.com> or michael.bennett-levy@virgin.net, or ☎0831 106768. This differs from mere small-ad auctions, of which there are now several, including some in Britain. It collects a worldwide mailing list of customers interested in your sort of item, and mails them whenever you advertise something new. The charge for sellers is about £70 a month.

The Rough Guide has a guide to police law, including crime prevention advice. The popular journalist who reported this described it as 'a bit dry' but well worth a read. www.rainer.demon.co.uk

The Lock Museum at Willenhall now has a web page at http://members.tripod.co.uk/lock_museum.

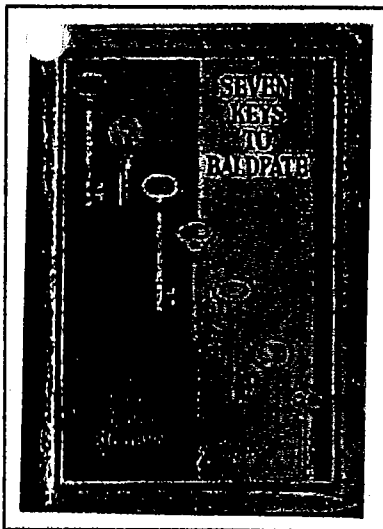
Baldpate Inn

Baldpate Inn is still in business. It passed out of the Mace family several years ago, and has been

refurbished. Set in the Rocky Mountain National Park, it welcomes visitors for vacations, weekends, or conferences, or just a meal (booking recommended). Though the present hosts appear not to have any interest in keys, the Key Room and Photo Collection remain, for anyone with memories of past visits. baldpatein@aol.com
☎ (970) 586-6151.

Several copies of *Seven keys to Baldpate* were auctioned on eBay earlier this year.

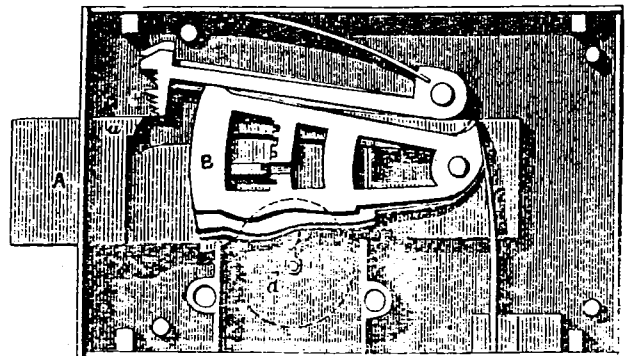
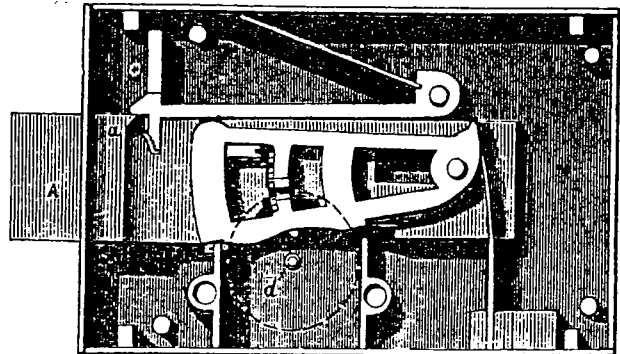
There were various editions, both with Snapp's illustrations, and film stills. *Richard Hopkins*



Ash's lock

This invention of Mr. Isaiah Ash, of Great Bridport-street, Blandford-square, relates to certain improvements applicable to tumbler or lever locks and latches, whereby much greater security is obtained than heretofore, and the difficulty of picking or un-locking the same without the proper key is greatly increased. The improvements consist in the addition and arrangement of certain levers which are herein called lever guards, which work on a pin either in the centre or at one end thereof, and which are placed above the bolt. One end of each lever guard is formed with a notched or toothed piece or segment, such pieces or segments being of different radii, and each lever guard being of the thickness of two of the ordinary levers or tumblers. The bolt is provided with a projection or stop adapted to take into the notches or teeth of the lever guards, and which Mr. Ash calls the bolt stop. Upon the key being applied to shoot the bolt, the levers or tumblers are elevated thereby in the usual manner, raising with them the lever guards, which, being clear of the bolt stop, allow the bolt to be shot. If, however, an attempt be made to pick the lock by the ordinary method of raising the tumblers one by one with the pick and

FIG. 1.



forcing the bolt back to meet the gatings, the object is defeated by the bolt stop taking into the notches or teeth of the lever guards which have not been raised, the same result taking place upon any one of the tumblers or levers being moved with the pick. In order to allow of the bolt stop being forced into the notched or toothed segments of the lever guards, the foremost chamber of the levers or tumblers is enlarged to admit of the motion of the main bolt stump. In order that the bolt may be shot back, all the tumblers or levers must be lifted simultaneously, so that the bolt stump will pass through the several slots or gatings therein, the lever guards being at the same time lifted by the tumblers or levers, and allowing the bolt to return to its position within the lock.

Fig. 1 is a lock, the parts being in their normal state, but with the bolt partly shot to bring the stump opposite the gatings. A is the bolt, showing the before-mentioned projection or bolt stop; a, the stump; B are the levers or tumblers; C are the lever guards; d, the drill pin for the reception of the key. The curtain is removed in order that the mechanism of the lock may be more clearly exhibited. Fig. 2 is the lock after the bolt has been shot, the same letters of reference being employed. The lever guards are shown detached.

Questions from readers

Write in to "Locks & Keys" with your questions about locks. Somebody will surely be able to supply answers. The Editor will be pleased to print a composite answer to questions. When replying, please mention the number of the question.

Wanted

Trevor Dowson would like any safe name plates; he has swops to trade.
17 Landseer Drive, Gleadless Valley,
Sheffield, Yorkshire S14 1BS

Tony Beck collects lost key reward tags; he would like to swop or buy any he does not have. He would also like any information about the history of these tags, to what extent they were used, and what became of the companies.

19 Lawrence Ave Chaddesden Derby DE21 4RD. (An article on key tags will appear in a later issue. *Ed.*)

Joseph F Cantore seeks 2 spare wheel locks as shown left; these were used on European cars, especially Mercedes, in the '20's-'30's. [It appears to be the early lever mechanism Discus padlock — can anyone tell us the history of these, which are now made in various sizes, with a pin tumbler mechanism, by several companies? *Ed.*]
925 S Route 83 Elmhurst Illinois 60126
USA ☎ (630) 832-8600.

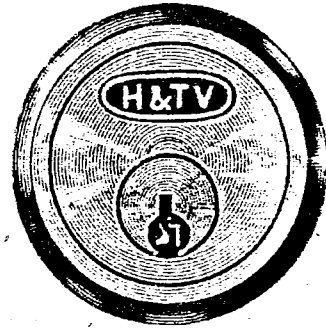


A reader reports that mental hospitals (i.e. asylums) are good hunting grounds for locks. Most have now been closed and are being demolished. Also, in the last decade two thousand bank branches have closed, and in the next five years, another thousand will go. Strongrooms are usually left, but counter furniture etc. usually goes. Where to?

*lever mechanism
Discus[?] padlock used
as wheel lock*

Who first?

Several persons invented various forms of pin tumbler lock, on both sides of the Atlantic, during the nineteenth century. However, the commercial success of the ubiquitous pin tumbler cylinder locking device is due to the Yale & Towne Manufacturing Company.



Jim Evans is researching who made the first cylinder pin tumbler lock in the UK. He is looking for information and lock illustrations on :

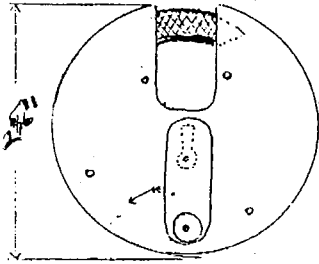
John Birch of Walsall; Oldham Locks of Nelson, Lancs.; REGAL brand; EXCEL brand; ALTUS - Apex brand; Kenrick catalogue illustrations.

Jim would also like to have a Kenrick made pin tumbler lock.

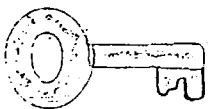
[In addition to the conventional Yale-type cylinder pin tumbler lock, there are also some variants, such as the Kieft cylinder, and the round key Ace-type, which has been made in various sizes.

The study could be further extended to consider some other small-key cylinder locks. Chubb made at least two, apparently starting before the turn of the century. Hobbs & Co. made one. Were these introduced to compete with the conventional Yale-type cylinder pin tumbler lock? As late as the nineteen-thirties, some popular DIY books were still showing how to install lever/warded rimlatches. *Ed.*]

Jim Evans would like your information sent to him at 10 Sherringham Drive Essington Wolverhampton WV11 2EB. (tel 01922 401066, fax 01922 710808). The results of his labours are expected to appear in these pages in a later issue.



1/16 RADIUS



Some of the stock of Peter Friedhelm Von Knorre
 This is the 'plain standard stuff' Peter sells, which is available in plenty! Better stuff often comes in, but sells out fast. Not shown are various eastern padlocks and keys.

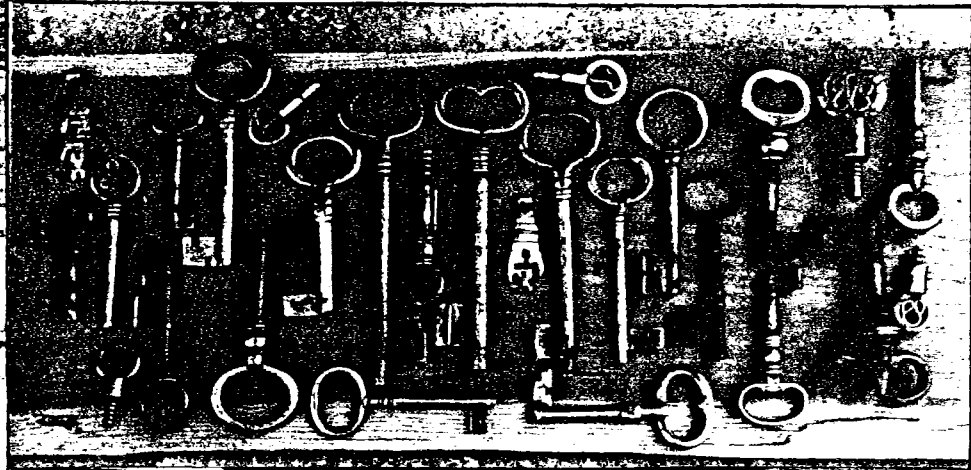
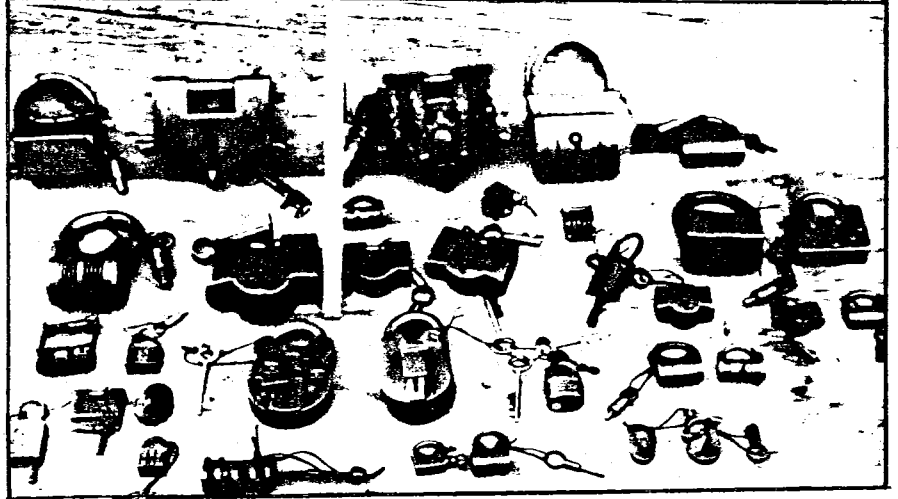
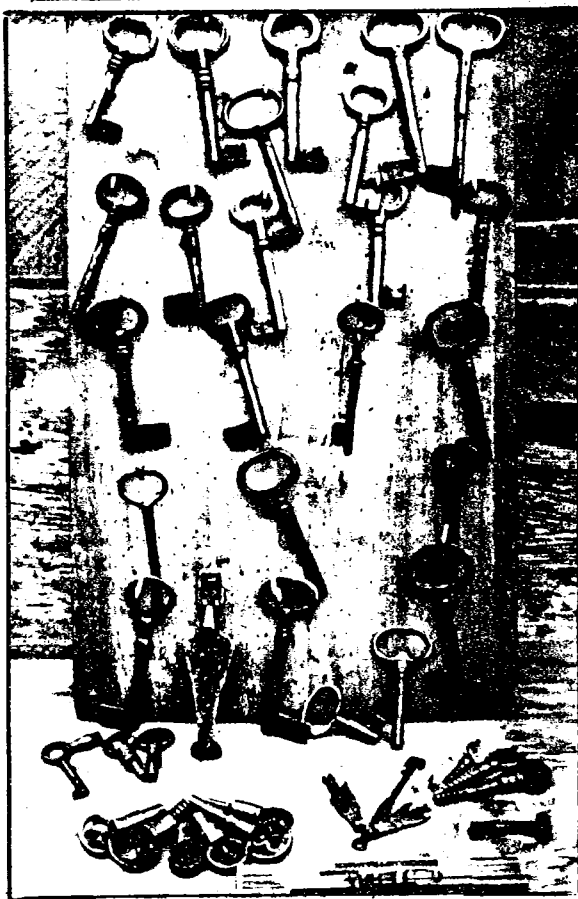


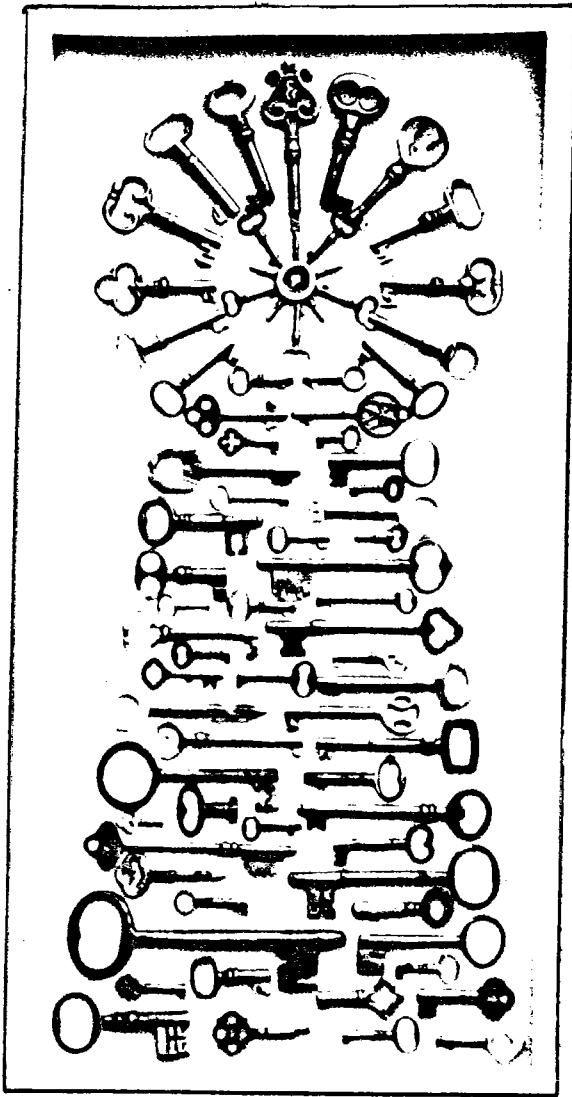
PETER



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 Mob. Tel : 0171 - 5460901
 Fax: (0049) 0761 - 2921881





Some of *John Stone's* keys, decoratively arranged in picture frames, bringing art to keys.

(A description of the wooden locks should appear in a later issue.)

These pictures unfortunately do not do justice to the colour photographs John sent.

