



LOCKS & KEYS



Issue 15

The Newsletter for lock collectors

July 2001

George Price, of the Cleveland Safe Works

WHAT MADE GEORGE PRICE TICK?

George Price took over a safe manufactory in Wolverhampton in the early 1850's.

By 1855, he had installed steam machinery, employing thirty men. In 1856, he published '*A Treatise on Locks and Keys and Fire-proof Safes*' - nearly 1,000 pages long. How might he have managed such a work marathon?

George Price, who was my paternal great-grandfather, was born in Bilston in the West Midlands in 1819. Victoria and Albert were born the same year. 1819 was the year of the Peterloo Massacre in Manchester, the year the first steamship crossed the Atlantic.

He was the seventh child, the second George and the only surviving son of Joseph and Ann Price - the first George, born in 1809, died in infancy. Ann was previously Ann Pedley, and her father, Isaac, was an agent to an old established firm of American merchants, Messrs. Walker, of Birmingham. Her grandfather was a factor in Willenhall - home of the mass-produced cheap locks. Bilston, Wolverhampton, Wil-

lenhall, Bradley are very close neighbours of each other.

Joseph was present when the great iron-master John Wilkinson established the first forge to make iron from the pig at his blast furnace in Bilston, around 1782. It is possible that Joseph's father was an iron smelter, like Wilkinson. The landscape was peppered with spoil heaps and mineshafts - some sunk in the middle of streets, the coal being so plentiful, so near the surface. The land around the shafts collapsed regularly; the soil was quite sandy. Hundreds of workshops of lock and key makers and mongers, jappanners and blacksmiths, brassfounders and iron bar manufacturers, were tucked away in the courts and passages of Willenhall, Bilston and Wolverhampton - 'as much out of sight as birds' nests'.

George knew many locksmiths, though he was never apprenticed to one. He knew Thomas Brueton, whose father and grandfather were dog-collar lock makers, one of a very few wealthy lockmakers. He died in 1844, much respected by all who knew him - 'a man of strict integrity, a kind neighbour, a sincere friend and a good Christian.' John Harper took over his business.

Then there was James Carpenter - 'one of the most enterprising lock makers of the district - one of the first to apply machinery to aid in their production.' Carpenter also died in 1844, and was succeeded by Messrs. Carpenter and Tildesley.

Other acquaintances were Richard Manning, a Wolverhampton keymaker and his

continued on p.3

"Locks & Keys" needs 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 Word7, Works4.5, Write, Wordpad, or saved as .rtf can be used. Please send an sae if you need a reply.

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Edited & Published by Richard Phillips
"Merlewood", The Loan, WEST LINTON,
Peebleshire, UNITED KINGDOM EH46 7HE
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email: rphillips52@btinternet.com

Looking to the future

Pat Tempest has written a novel about the early life of her great-great grandfather. When it was almost finished, she innocently thought to approach the Master Locksmiths Association to enquire if anyone had heard of a 19th century safe and lock maker named George Price. She was astounded at the reaction. I'll pass on any further news of publication when I hear.

'Wooden locks' could have several meanings. I was surprised to find how late stock locks were still being produced. For those of you who would like to own a wooden lock but have not got around to making your own, you can now buy one — see p8

Many US readers will know of the publishing effort of Don Stewart for collectors. Since Don's death, Richard Chenovick has taken over the business. The list of what is available is reprinted in this issue, reduced in size to save space. Padlocks are a particularly popular aspect of lock collecting in the USA.

Readers might like to know of the West Coast Lock Collectors Newsletter. The Editor is Don Jackson PO Box 272 Pleasanton California 94566 USA. Fax is 925-846-4022; doggyjack@home.com. Subscription is US \$16, other countries \$19.

It's subscription renewal time for your *Newsletter* again, dear readers! As this newsletter is still below an economic level of subscribers, I would urge you to renew promptly. Please also take this opportunity to tell me what you like/don't like about the *Newsletter*. Although I have received material for publication, I would still like to hear about your favourite locks!

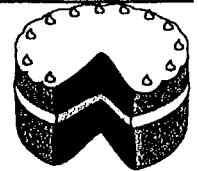
The long-promised article on cataloguing will appear next year. There will be something on prison locks and prison escapes, coin-operated locks, and Gibbons (who took over the business of George Price). Details of several more bottle locks will appear. Also waiting in the wings is an article on a little-known but interesting character, Christofer Polhem.

Despite, or because of, all the effort put into making locks difficult to pick, it is sometimes said that only locksmiths and spies pick locks. My own (distant) brush with the aftermath of a spy and his locks remains to be recounted.

Though few of us can afford to own mediaeval locks or chests, there are still a good many to be seen in museums and churches in Britain and Europe. There are also some other examples of spectacular old ironwork to be seen. I hope to publish something on this in forthcoming issues.

So far there has been little interest expressed in modern, current, locks. There are numerous modern high security locks which might be interesting to describe.

Feedback



Pushbutton locks: A reader reports: A business nearby receives stock at the back door, and has a cctv camera to cover the area. The vtr was in the back office, whose door was not merely unlocked but wedged open. A young man walked past the receptionist in the front showroom, into the office, and walked out carrying the vtr. He told the receptionist on his way out he had collected it for repair. Soon a 5-button Unicam comlock was installed, and later the door began to be shut. For the benefit of the various service men who used the office, numbered paper spots were stuck on the buttons. Those involved in the combination were soon finger-marked. The combination was (2+4), 3; this is, apparently, the factory combo. (As mentioned in the last issue, the cheaper 14-button locks are supplied set to a random combination.)

Jon Millington: Several things caught my eye in *Locks & Keys* #13. I liked the padlock on page 1; if it were patented, I don't think it was between 1921 and 1930 because I have all the abridgements for Class 44 from 1855 to 1930. Later, I'll search through the previous volume, but it's quite a time-consuming process. As it was, I looked through almost 1000 pages in the hope of finding a diagram that matched your illustration.

Many thanks for Newsletter #14. It occurred to me that you might like to know the source for the Arabian padlock illustrated on page 7. It's from vol. 1, p. 253, of *The Illustrated Exhibitor and Magazine of Art*, a part-work published by Cassell in two volumes in 1852. The lock appeared in 'Domestic Art amongst the Turks and Arabs', and the relevant text is on the next page, 254:

'The padlock and key, of which we give engravings, may serve to furnish a good idea of the taste in ornament, as well as the mechanical ingenuity, of the Arabs... A lock of precisely similar construction to this one is preserved in the Musée des Thermes at Paris.'

No date for this padlock is suggested. Vol. 2 of this work has an illustrated article 'Locks and Keys', pp. 59-64, mainly culled from John Chubb's *On the Construction of Locks and Keys*, 1850. (Thank you - this picture was received without any source other than an old broken book with the covers and front missing. *Ed.*)

A television series on great estates, which was repeated recently on British tv, featured Chatsworth House in Derbyshire. The programme showed the repair of a John Wilkes 'Cavalier Indicating Lock', and reader Mr George Olifent was shown repairing a french masterpiece lock, also in regular use in the house. (We must have a look at the Cavalier lock in a later issue. *Ed.*)

George Price (continued from p.1)

step-father, John Roughley of Coven; Thomas Wright, employed by Mr. Duce; Mr. Yates, Mr. Duce, Thomas Hart, James Gibbons Junior, and Mr. Aubin. For 'never equalled inventive genius' in the construction of locks, he named the Walton family of Wolverhampton.

Joseph was not a locksmith — he was a printer, a local historian and a warden for many years at St. Leonard's Bilston, where he had been baptised on April 3rd 1774. Joseph was also a close friend of the Reverend William Leigh, who was an Evangelical Christian, and famous for his *History of the Cholera Epidemic* — a calamity which carried off 742 of Bilston's inhabitants in August 1832, leaving 450 orphans under 12 years of age. In 1840, Joseph produced a summary of Mr. Leigh's *History*, and George Price appears on the frontispiece as the publisher, when he was 21 years of age. Facsimiles of this summary are sold in the Wolverhampton libraries - where it is much more widely known than George's *Treatise*.

Joseph published in 1836 'A Historical Account of Bilston'. He saw the world through biblical eyes - his book starts with The Creation. 'In the beginning of the world, we are informed by holy writ, the all-beautiful Creator gave to Man dominion over all the earth...' A large part of his account is taken up with lists: how many people lived in this street, how many in that court. The streets had names like Wet Furlongs, Throttlegoose Lane, Catchem's Corner, and Gibbet TollGate.

Joseph was also a magistrate's clerk and road surveyor, according to Bilston Directories of 1833 and 1834. By 1841, he was 'a gentleman engaged in buying property', with George owning the print shop.

George's early career

By 1850, George was listed as an 'Agent' in one of the Trade Directories, living in Tettenhall - the most prestigious suburb of Wolverhampton, with offices in The Market Place, Wolverhampton, and Oxford Street, Bil-

ston - presumably the print shop. He was then thirty-one years of age, already married with two children.

In the 1851 census, George's address was Oaks Crescent, Wolverhampton - definitely a few notches up the social scale from Bilston, but a notch down from Tettenhall, being closer to Wolverhampton town centre. Even more versatile than Joseph, George was listed as 'Agent/ Accountant/ Auctioneer/ Appraiser General - and Nurseryman employing three men'.

In Trade Directories for the same year, he advertised his services as 'Auctioneer/ Accountant/ General Agent/ Agent to the Metropolitan Counties and General Life Assurance Annuity Loan and Investment Society and the Royal Farmers' and General Fire Insurance Company'. A sideline of his: 'Debts collected in any part of the United Kingdom.'

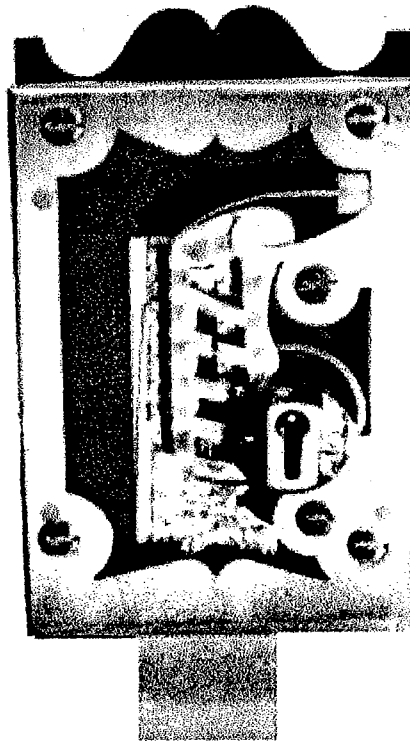
As an insurance agent, he would be aware of the financial rewards awaiting anyone who could produce reli-

able fire- and burglar-proof safes. Joseph, too, would have been very aware of the vulnerability of priceless documents to fire, theft and damp. So, living in the Workshop of the World, George knew he was likely to be on to a winner when he took over, in the 1850's, the works of Richard Noake and Son of Cleveland Street, Wolverhampton 'Manufacturers of improved wrought iron fire-proof deed, jewel, plate and cash chests - made and fitted up to order, with Chubb's Patent Locks' - no less. Mr. Noake would have been a good class of manufacturer.

Price the safemaker

It is not until 1855 that George's name appears as a safemaker - although still an auctioneer - in

White's Directory. Only one year before the publication of the *Treatise*. Noakes, safemakers, of Cleveland Street, disappeared from local directories after 1851, as did the entry for George the florist and nurseryman. No mention of the debt collecting.



Price Ne Plus Ultra lock. This specimen is unusual in being triple throw, and would have locked a strongroom door rather than a safe. Price fitted a narrow nozzle of hard steel to frustrate drilling his lock. This was particularly difficult with the spade bits of the period.

An article in the *Wolverhampton Chronicle* for June 20th 1855, quoted in the *Treatise*, reads as follows:

'We have inspected the new works of Mr. Price and were as much surprised as pleased with our visit... The manufacture of wrought iron safes we have always considered one of the legitimate trades of Wolverhampton as it is well known that both the iron plates of which they are made and the locks which secure them, are made in the neighbourhood of the town. And yet, their manufacture has been almost entirely confined to London and Liverpool. We were very much pleased with the machinery and fittings and also with the engine made by Thompson and Co. of Bilston - the whole appeared to work 'as easy as an old shoe'. The buildings are substantial, the rooms wide, lofty and well ventilated. Crowding of workmen is completely avoided. The iron of which the safes are constructed goes in at one end of the building in sheets and comes out at the other end a finished and painted safe, ready to be lowered into the carrier's wagon.'

He had sixty hands 'at full work with the aid of steam machinery and every contrivance which ingenuity could suggest' - yet he only manufactured three hundred and ten safes in six months.

The entrepreneur

So a picture emerges now of a man full of Victorian entrepreneurial spirit. Not directly involved with the production of safes until the early 1850's, yet by 1855, he had taken over a works and established a large, specially designed manufactory fitted with steam machinery, in contrast with Chubb's premises - converted from an old poorhouse. At the same time, he would have been well on the way to producing his *Treatise*, published in 1856. He had also travelled in 1855 to Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dublin and Belfast to lecture on his 'astounding discoveries' 'But for ill health', he wrote, 'I would have ... Visited ... other towns and cities in England.'

What was driving him? I suggest that the answer — or part of it — can be found on page 83 of the *Treatise*.

'Soon after taking over the business of which I am now proprietor, relying on the statements of other makers as well as on the assurances of a person in my employ, as to the fire-resisting capabilities of safes made fire-proof by the use of a simple non-conductor, (which activated the production of steam to preserve the contents) I had a public test of two safes made on this principle and invited my friends and fellow townsmen to be present at the trial. One safe was in an intense fire for three hours, and the other for five hours — Mr. Milner's foreman and his agent and lock manufacturer in Wolverhampton be-

ing present and assisting. The contents comprised books, bound in leather and forril, loose papers and a parchment deed. After the safes were cooled and opened, the books were found to be burnt black at the edge for some distance towards the centre of the paper; the loose papers were more or less burned, the leather destroyed, and not a vestige of parchment could be found.

'The disappointment, vexation and chagrin I experienced at the result of this my first test, caused me to study the manufacture, not only as a mechanical art, but as a science requiring some research. From that day, it has had my undivided study and attention, and my two patents and this little work are the result.'

In his introduction, he apologised for the self-defensive style of the first 175 pages of the *Treatise*, caused, he maintained, by the 'extraordinary opposition which the

author experienced, and the strange course of conduct adopted towards him ... by the agents and representatives and in one case the foreman of a competitor in the same trade.'

It is very clear by Chapter XII

- page 132 - that the hated competitor was Mr. Milner who excluded parchment from his own fire resistance challenges, which were successful, resulting in bulging order books, yet allowed the novice safe maker, George, to include parchment in that first challenge, which inevitably failed.

George realised what had happened too late: he should have remembered, he wrote, that since he used to sell parchment strips, when he was a printer, to bonnet makers to boil for size to stiffen bonnet brims, steam could not be used to protect parchment from heat. Milner, he declared, was cheating by claiming that 'deeds' would be safe, and then excluding parchment from the actual test. 'It would invariably be assumed (by the public) that 'deeds' meant parchment deeds, even though the word was excluded.'

From there on, George was on his high horse, the bit between his teeth, hell bent on becoming 'the best safemaker possible.' All that safe manufacturers can be expected to do is to make a depository as secure against fire and thieves as the laws of nature and science will permit.'

While the first 175 pages of the *Treatise* are centred on an intense, furious involvement in the problem of fire-proofing, the major part of the book, so beloved by present day lock collectors, is the systematic listing and examination of every lock known to man.

He must have used researchers: the most likely being William Dawes. Included in one of George's detailed advertisements of around 1860 is the claim that 'the

'Safe manufacture ... has had my undivided study and attention, and my two patents and this little work are the result.'

whole of the manufacturing department (of Cleveland Works) is under the personal superintendence of Mr. W. Dawes, C. & M.E., for five years Chief Engineer to the Coalbrookdale Company...'

George had been married in the early 1840's to Jane Dawes from Wrockwardine, Shropshire — a village very close to Ironbridge. Was William Dawes his brother-in-law? William's name also appears with George's on an 1863 patent, and also as a witness to other patents. A well-qualified ally. Perhaps an unassuming man, who did not mind George's taking the glory.

It is also possible that Joseph had done some local research before his death in 1849. A large proportion of the *Treatise* is made up of quotes from a great number of sources — reports, patents, newspapers etc. Joseph and William, then, were well qualified to have been George's researchers, sorting evidence, creating lists and tables, talking to local locksmiths.

Consumer information

George also used the *Treatise* to advertise his own wares — even though they could only have been tried and tested over a very short time. He preached careful management and the production of efficient and useful articles at the lowest possible cost to the public. On page 124 of the *Treatise*, we find the comment that 'the lists of prices published by the different safe makers are unintelligible to the general public.'

So he set up his own 'Which Safe?' survey, sending the specification for his own 'first class safes' - single and double door models — to his competitors, asking them to quote their prices for similar safes. A table of prices is given on pages 126 and 127. The George Price safes were the cheapest — twenty five per cent cheaper than those manufactured by his enemy, Thomas Milner. I wonder if he set his own prices before or after receiving the other manufacturers' quotes? Later editions of the *Treatise* and of *Forty Burglaries* contain many pages of advertisements, not only for his own safes, but also for the iron products of his fellow manufacturers. Revenue from this would have helped cover his costs.

I have written a novel around the books of Joseph and George, and my central interest is: What motivated them? It seems to me that Joseph, a religious man, wanted to set the record right in his *Summary* of Mr. Leigh's *History of the Cholera Epidemic*, that cholera in Bilston. He wanted to make clear his view that the epidemic was God's punishment for the licentious behaviour of the workers. Nothing to do with the condition of the town.

George perhaps inherited his father's need to go into print to set the record right, according to his own

sights. It was, after all, one the things which Victorians did, as printing technology developed - and George had more first hand knowledge of printing than he had of lock and key making! So he and his unacknowledged team produced a *Treatise*, combining a personal

vendetta against a competitor, with a detailed and no doubt really useful list and description of locks and keys, plenty of promotion for Price's locks and safes and a brief history of Wolverhampton (perhaps written

by Joseph?) thrown in for good measure.

In 1863, he published 'a poem' - 'The Church of Christ'. Mostly, it's another list:

..There are Trinitarians and Arians,
Unitarians, Socinians, Arminians,
Antinomians, Calvinists, Brownists,
Presbyterians - English and Irish.
Wesleyan Methodists - Old and New;
Independents, Mystics, Quakers, Shakers,
Universalists, and Destructionists.
Sabbatarians and Moravians;
Swedenborgians and Moravians'
Baxterians and Hutchinsonians;
Lutherans and the Millenarians...

Oh, where is Christ's Church on earth to be found?

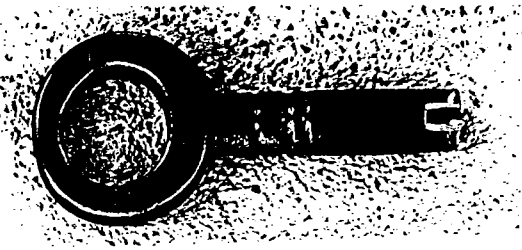
When I called the Master Locksmiths *after* completing what I hoped was the last draft of the book, to enquire if anyone had heard of George Price, I was astonished at the response I got. My knowledge was very patchy, largely gleaned from my cousin Peggy in Canada and her historian e-mail friend, Fred Miller. It is only with the generous help of some lock collectors over the last few weeks that I have been able to piece together these notes.

I had no idea that the family copy of the *Treatise* is a Bible to the select band of lock collectors, or that experts like Tom Watson, for instance, had never heard of a George Price lock being picked. The family had a vague idea that he might have made the strong rooms for the Bank of England. (Did he?) I have to confess that because he clearly won no prizes at the 1851 Great Exhibition, which is covered at some length in the *Treatise*, I thought he was some kind of nut and a fraud ... never realising that he had not even bought Cleveland Works in 1851.

So what motivates me? Who's to say? Some kind of a nut, I suppose.

Grateful thanks to Trevor Dowson, John Holden, Peter Scholefield, Chris Taylor and Tom Watson and the merry band of lock collectors who entertained my brother - George Price III - and myself so royally in November 1999. Pat Tempest

I had no idea that the family copy of the *Treatise* is a Bible to the select band of lock collectors.



Small forged key

Can anyone supply any information on the above key, shown twice actual size? *Brian Haw* has a dozen of them. It is forged in one piece, with a single slot across the end. It does not appear to be a security key, and I know of no handcuff it would fit. Could it be for a switch, or budget lock?



Bookshelf

A mixed bag of reading this issue. There are not too many novels in which locks feature prominently, and even fewer in which they are an essential part portrayed accurately. The latest in the series of Victorian police Sergeant Verity novels by Francis SELWYN is *The hangman's child* (London, Hale, 2000, ISBN 07090 6683 x). Set in Victorian London, it is loosely based around the Cornhill Robbery. The author has taken considerable liberties with the facts, and shows ignorance of lock details. It is not in the same class as a book on the first 'great train robbery' which will be noticed in a forthcoming issue. Nevertheless, many readers of crime thrillers will find it a good read.

An interesting story, and aid to dating, is an article on wood screws. H W DICKINSON, *Origin and manufacture of wood screws*, *Newcomen Transactions XXII*, 1941 tells the story in detail, and is as interesting for its account of the development of technology as for dating. Readers might also like to be aware of the *Patent abridgements: nails rivets bolts screws, nuts and washers 1618-1866*. This is volume 58 in the series published in the late nineteenth century by the Commissioners of Patents. The series also includes volumes on locks, and safes.

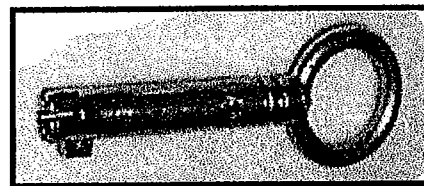
Keymaking to a Bramah padlock

Every now and then something comes along, which if not financially rewarding gives a sense of satisfaction when you finally succeed in doing it. When I was at the MLA convention one Easter, I met some fellow antique lock enthusiasts.

One of these, Jon Millington, although not a locksmith, is a keen padlock collector. He produced a beautiful little Bramah padlock he had acquired. Knowing of my interest in Bramah, he asked me if I thought I could make a key to it without taking it apart. I gave it some thought and said that I would try.

Some time later having nothing much to do one evening (apart from paperwork) I turned to this lock and the method I employed to make the key was as follows.

Firstly I turned some steel bar on the lathe down to the required size for the shaft of the key, namely 5mm, and drilled the hole in the end to suit the drillpin in the lock. Next I picked the padlock about a 10th of a turn so the sliders were pressed against the locking plate by the internal spring pressure, and then measured the depth from the top of the keyhole to the top of the washer that rests on the spring and moves the sliders. Then I transferred this measurement to the key and lightly marked it with felt pen.



Modern stainless steel Bramah key

It was then the 'simple' matter of treating the sliders (which are now in the correct position to open the lock) as wards and I cut the key until it would fully enter the lock to the depth I had marked. This done I made a bit for the key and silver soldered it onto the shaft, carefully trimming the back of the bit until the key worked perfectly. All that remained was to make a ringbow head, silver solder it on and polish the key. The padlock is about an inch long and has five sliders although the cylinder is machined for seven; perhaps it was part of a master-keyed system?

Paul Prescott

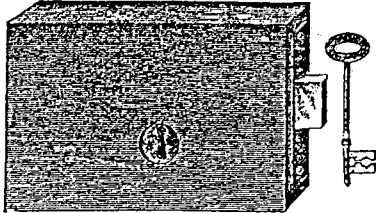


Thomas Crompton: (North Ashton, Wigan) Wooden locks

Designs varied little through most of the century. These locks appeared in catalogues from the 1920's through to 1954. By then, the larger stock locks were only made to order, instead of from stock by the dozen.

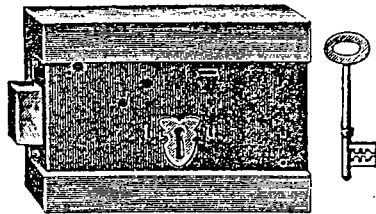
Crompton also made a Banbury lock with a bushed keyhole, so that it had a conventional key bearing on the keyhole, instead of the bridge.

Trevor Dowson



No. 901. Double-handed Stock Locks

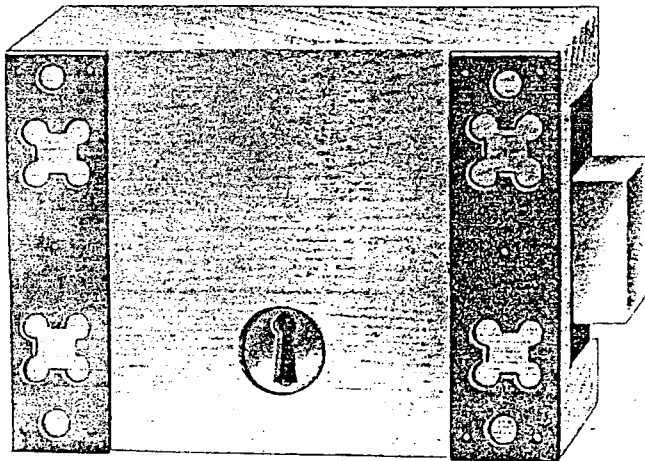
Sizes 7 8 9 10 ins



No. 907. Double-handed Stock Locks

Bolt is always out at one side

Sizes 8 9 10 ins.



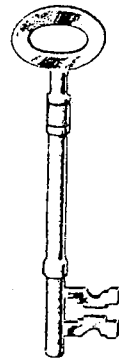
No. 906 WOOD STOCK PLATE LOCK

SPECIAL EXTRA-HEAVY

Sizes ... ins.	8	9	10
Width ... ins.	6	6½	6½
Ins., key-hole centre to bolt face.	4	4½	5

WITH BRASS BRIDGES
SOLID OUTSIDE BRASS WARDS

EXTRA HEAVY POLISHED
WROUGHT BOLT



No. 909
CHURCH
DOOR LOCK

EXTRA STRONG

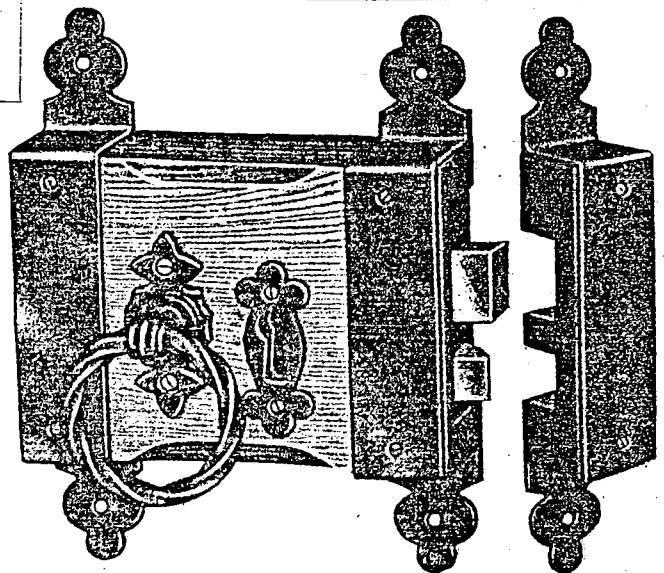
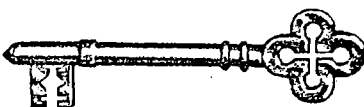
ORNAMENTAL
CLIP-BARS

Sizes ... ins.	8	9	10
Width ... ins.	6	6	6½
Ins., key-hole centre to bolt face	3½	3½	4½
Centre to follower	5½	6½	7½

OAK STAPLE

TWO BOLTS

TREFOIL AND
QUARTERFOIL
BOW KEYS



1946

1954

Wanted / For Sale

Lock for 15 century French chateau sought

I am looking for an old church front door lock - wooden frame with iron strapping and a large key, and possibly a bolt. Size needs to be >180 mm wide and >125 mm high. [Approximately 7x5"] Or any information on appropriate locks.

Dr J I Pitman, 8 Tilmore Gardens Petersfield, Hants GU32 2JQ. JohnlainPitman@aol.com

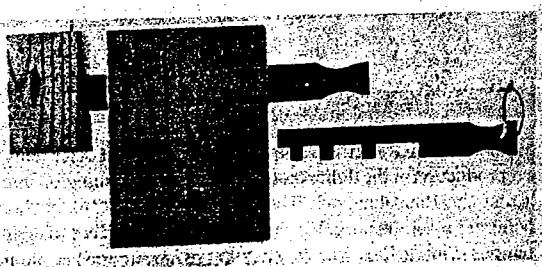
Police cell door, Herne Bay (Kent) PS

The police station was built around 1899 and it is assumed that the door is original. There are 2 locks on the cell door both unmarked. The bigger of the two locks (and I would think the original lock) is about 10" x 6". It is operated by a key that is about 4" long and w marked 'Gibbons Wolverhampton' and M2, the cell itself being 'Male 2'. The other smaller lock is operated by a 2" Chubb key. Also on the door is an extremely hefty bolt (about 14" long with a diameter of 1") and the bar that secures the door flap. If you are interested in purchase and want any more information do not hesitate to contact me.

Chris Gurney ChrisGurn@aol.com

Wooden lock, "Mediaeval padlock"

Now you can buy your own from Dixie Gun Works Inc. Union City Tenn. 38261 USA, tel 800-238-6785. They also sell chatelaines and pewter copies of old keys, large and small.



MT0101 WOODEN LOCKS: No... these are not wooden locks for muzzleloading guns! They are copies of old wooden locks that feature wooden tumblers, latches and keys. Used by early mountain people to secure out buildings...mostly the smokehouse. Their purpose was not necessarily to keep out thieves, but to keep out children who might leave the door open permitting dogs to enter. We know these do not pertain to the shooting sport but the "boss" liked them and they do have some historical value. We suggest that you order *Foxfire 6*; an entire chapter is devoted to these locks. These new made locks are cut using modern equipment and are made of pine. Approximately 6" x 8" x 1 1/2" thick; key is 9" long. Price \$ 24.00

MEDIAEVAL LOCKS: Here's another little something we have come up with to satisfy "the person who has everything." Reproduction steel mediaeval padlock for castles (1700 period)...or...for locking your car to a post! With odd keys. Talk about something different! Padlock is 5" tall and weighs about 2 lbs. 14 oz.
MI0815 Medieval Padlock \$ 29.95

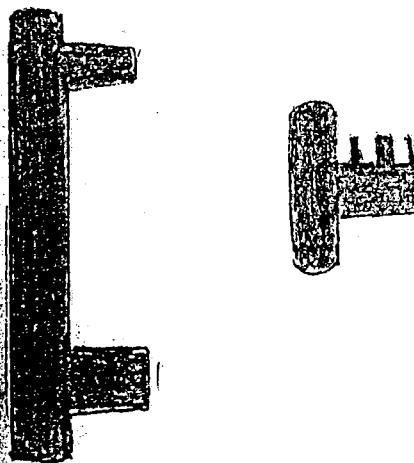
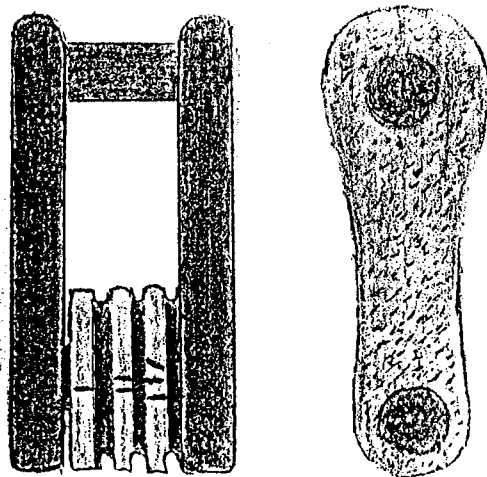
Questions from readers

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.



21] This combination lock was dug up by a metal detectorist. It is made of iron, the wheels possibly bronze but probably copper. Each wheel has only one mark on it! either I, II, or II/. The lock might be Irish; can anyone give any information?

Colin Lewis



Displaying padlocks on the wall

Most people, unless they have a cabinet suitable for the purpose, opt for perforated hardboard or a number of narrow shelves to show their padlocks. Unfortunately both methods can give them a regimented look; they just end up in straight rows and it is very tempting to pack them too closely, so that when you remove one you disturb others nearby. Perforated hardboard has the further disadvantage that the multitude of holes is a distraction; also, you have to make sure that the hooks do not fall off.

So what's the alternative? I think a far better solution for a wall-mounted display is a piece of 9mm or 12mm plywood or mdf, covered in baize. This comes in several colours in addition to the usual green that you find on card tables. For my display I chose red, which provides an excellent background for both brass and steel. An easy way to fix the baize is to fold it over the board and glue it to the back; I found Copydex (latex solution) excellent for this. My board, incidentally, measures 75 x 90 cm (about 2½ x 3 ft).

There are numerous ways of fastening the board to the wall. Perhaps the simplest is to screw it directly to the wall using countersunk screws. Alternatively you can hang the board using mirror plates; these can be secured either to the top or, as I chose, about a quarter of the way down. I bolted them right through the board and hid the nuts on the front with strategically placed padlocks. Before doing this, I first elongated the top hole in both plates so as to engage dome-headed screws in the wall. All fastenings are concealed with this method.

Hooked

For hanging the padlocks, brassed steel cup hooks are ideal. They come in different sizes to suit any shackle, can be screwed directly through the baize, and are easily moved elsewhere if you want to rearrange your display. I prefer those without a shoulder because I wanted to screw some in further than others to allow the backs of the narrower padlocks to rest on the baize. For very small padlocks you can use screw eyes and open them up with pliers to allow the padlocks to be lifted off. One word of warning: be very careful if you need to drill through the baize – it tends to catch on the drill and be pulled out of shape.

Jon Millington

[Before drilling, cutting the fabric with a sharp bradawl is useful. Ed.]

A Salvo on demolition

In the 1960's, when I started collecting locks, demolition was the word on every town planner's lips. There were still bombsites where I grew up in south-east England. In the 50's, many hadn't even been cleared. Then the planners started on areas Goering hadn't reached. Streets of houses were demolished, though there were still overspill estates of pre-fabs. I remember wandering through Liverpool and Preston streets a few years later, ahead of the demolition men. Some houses were just vacated, and still full of abandoned furniture ... but that's another story. I collected a variety of latches and locks, but much else was bulldozed. Old was bad - new was good. Some of the tower blocks built then have already been demolished in their turn.

Thornton Kay saw sights like that, in London bombsites from the age of 5yrs, in 1955. A section through a building, with ornaments still on the mantle shelf - 15 years after the bomb fell! Beautiful picture tiles around a fireplace, or in a front porch ...

In the early 70's, Kay started running a builders' co-operative salvage yard in Bath. He failed to stop the Council demolishing 2,000 Georgian and Victorian houses, and smashing many of the fireplaces for scrap (some which would now be worth £50,000 each). He did salvage some things from the waste.

Thornton Kay founded *Salvo*, the publishing and information service on architectural salvage. He provides county listings on businesses that deal in salvage. He has an attention to detail that could save many house restorers, and architects, much bother and expense. However, many old items do need restoration, which is either time-consuming, or expensive, or both.

Salvo, 18 Ford Village, Berwick-on-Tweed,
Northumberland TD15 2QJ (01890 820333)
www.salvoweb.com

Someone must have invented it

I have the front of a small letter pouch, made by a late victorian bookbinder. It has a small round letter bag lock, nicely engraved (or probably stamped), in brass. Actually it is not a lock. It is a non-locking catch. Pulling down (with a finger-nail, for example,) the drill pin protruding from the small keyhole withdraws the latch. The drillpin is rivetted to a slide which forms a spring catch. These were common on small bags, collar boxes, and other such pouches, until after WWII.

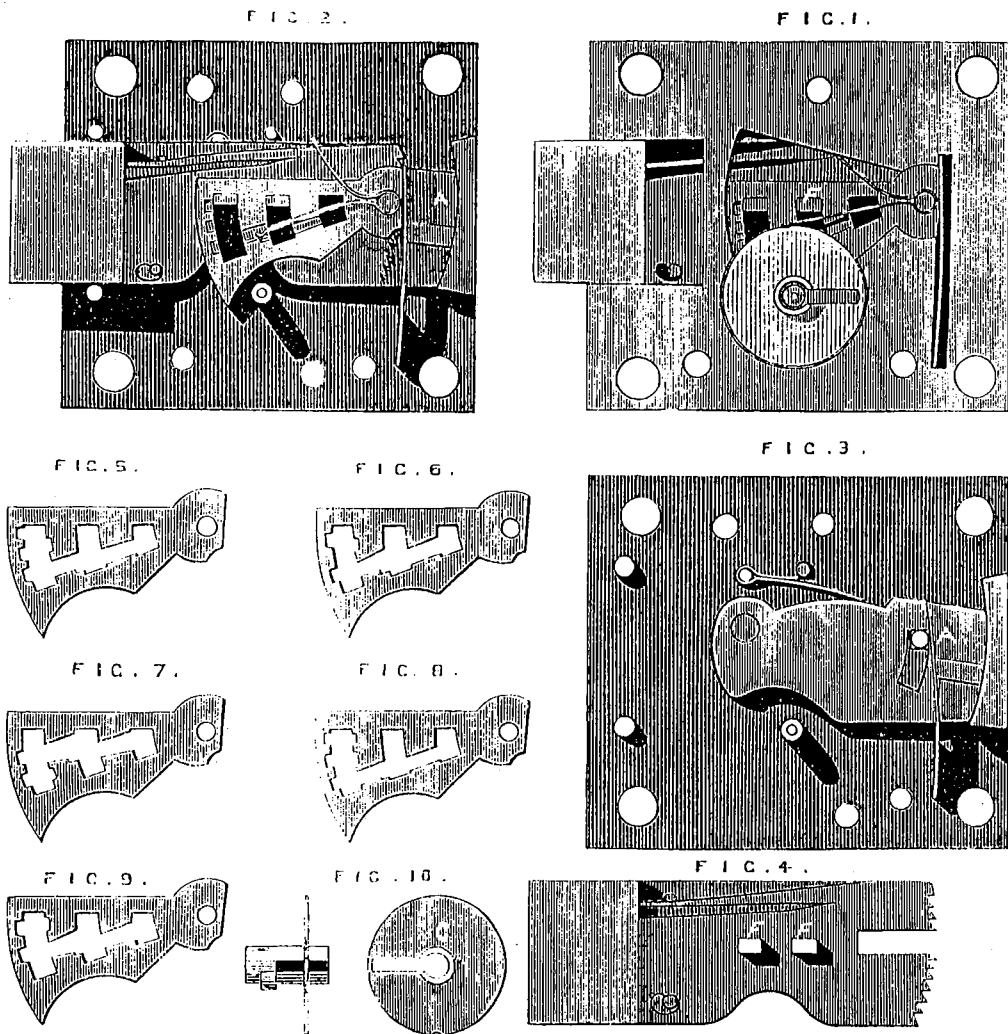
The catch was invented about 1818 by Wright.

information from George Price

HODGSON'S WEDGED-BOLT LOCK.

ENGINEERING.

July 9, 1869.



The "Citadel" wedged-bolt lock

The accompanying drawing shows the arrangement of a new impregnable lock designed by Mr Hodgson, of Wolverhampton. The construction is simple and the action of most of the parts is similar to that of all locks on the lever principle. The new feature, and one which, without any complicated action, increases to a considerable extent the security of the lock, consists in the introduction underneath the bolt, of a tumbler or lever carrying a block, A, the ratchet teeth on the edge of which are made to engage with corresponding serrations in the rear end of the bolt, by the action of a collar, B, on the curtain, C, upon the inner incline of the talon of the bolt, when the key is revolved in the lock, the levers being forced down by their springs in the ordinary way, and the lock is both locked and blocked. It will be seen that the wedge, A, will take all the back pressure from the stump, F, which in ordinary lever locks has to take the whole stress induced by violence. The action of unlocking is effected by the key in its revolution, first raising the tumblers to

the required position for the passage of the stump, F (which is fixed to and travels with the bolt), through the gratings in the tumblers. This action is accomplished by the terminal, or bolt step, of the key acting on the outer incline of the talon of the bolt, which is sent forward, and the teeth are thus disengaged from the teeth of the wedge, A. The key then elevates the wedge lever sufficiently for the bolt to travel along it by means of the slot shown in the drawing, and withdraws it in the ordinary way. The lock has an additional steel slide, with teeth corresponding to those on the bolt, and carrying a second stump. On any attempt to open the lock fraudulently, the bolt will move slightly forward, and will leave the teeth of the steel slide still securely engaged with the wedge lever. The removal of the instrument inserted in the keyhole, to obtain this movement, cannot be effected without turning the curtain, which, by the action of its collar upon the talon of the bolt, restores the bolt to its original position. The locks are fitted with a solid metal backing. *Engineering July 9, 1869.*

Lock Museum, Willenhall, TO CLOSE

NATIONAL LOCK MUSEUM FACES CLOSURE

BUILDINGS BEING SOLD

COLLECTION BEING MOTHBALLED

SCHOOL VISITS FORCED TO CANCEL

The Lock Museum Trust in Willenhall, issued a statement (18 May 2001) following an emergency meeting of the lock Museum Trust on 17th May.

At the meeting trustees were presented with a confidential report prepared by their accountants. This showed the effects of the decision by **Walsall Council** to cut the annual grant in half from £41,600 to £20,910 a year.

In order to stave off immediate closure trustees were informed that it would be necessary to :

sell the Administrative Headquarters and Storage facilities at 55 New Road

move the entire collection into the Education facilities in the museum

cancel all Education visits from 25th May.

Trustees reluctantly agreed to the above decisions.

Estate Agents and solicitors are today being instructed to sell the building.

Trustees were told that without these drastic measures that they faced a deficit of over £8,000.

Trustees were told in a report to their meeting yesterday;

"I cannot see any prospect where the Trust will be able to continue to offer the existing service. In considering all possible alternatives it is essential to sell 55 New Road for the Trust to be seen to be acting prudently and responsibly."

Chair of the Lock Museum, John Rothery states:

"The Council has left us with no choice - we shall have to close. The only decision left open to us is when. Even with the drastic measures that we are taking we will not see the year out. It is a very sad time for everyone. Despite meetings with the Council, they will not budge. They seem determined to close us down. It makes no sense at all.

"The museum is a priceless asset to our area. It will be a great loss to the borough and the whole of the Black Country. Our staff and volunteers are completely devastated."

"It is ironic that while the Lock Museum Trust was meeting in one room yesterday, considering the future of the Museum, the BBC were in other rooms making two historical films. Little did they know that this may be the last opportunity that they might have."

ENDS

Further information: John Rothery (Chair of the Trustees) 07931 301048

e.mail john.rothery@lineone.net

The Museum is likely to be closed by the end of July. Staff are being made redundant.