



# LOCKS & KEYS



Issue 3

The Newsletter for lock collectors

July 1997

## Never a last word

**I**nformation is coming in slowly. My thanks especially to Richard Hopkins and Peter Cowie for their contributions.

The last word can never be said on the subject of history. No sooner had the last issue been completed than more information on dating, and S. Mordan & Co. came to hand. We shall return to dating in future issues.

Mordan made not only door locks and the keyhole-blocking lock, but a wide range of others, using the Bramah mechanism. I now have advertisements for portfolio and ledger locks. Mordan even offered an ornate key with a gold ringbow.

One of the most frequent requests is for information, especially in print. There are some sources in this issue. The range of books and articles which might be of interest to lock collectors is very wide and varied. My first aim is to show a wide variety of items, rather than selecting any particular period or type. I hope all readers will find something of use to them amongst the items listed.

I would be pleased to know of any particular subjects that readers would like to read about. I can make use of several bibliographies and catalogues to find details of books.

"Locks & Keys" needs your contributions!

## Read all about it

**A**n anyone wishing to read about locks would probably wish to read a bibliography of locks, with which Keith Amatt gained his Fellowship of the Library Association in 1973. It gives annotated entries for most items published in English up to that time. No bibliographer can safely claim to be literally comprehensive, but Mr Amatt has been thorough, and personally inspected most of the 1,465 items included. Just how thorough I can vouch. I saw a mention of a book in my own searches, but could not trace it; eventually I gave up and assumed it did not really exist. Mr Amatt found that it was a bookbinding exercise produced by students at Maidstone College of Art, who made a few pages of illustrations and text and gave them a fine binding.

This bibliography is in the library at the Library Association headquarters, in Ridgmount Street, London WC1, where it may be seen by personal callers. It is not available by inter-library loan.

It was formerly available in Britain from University Microfilms. It is no longer available from Britain, but it can be ordered here.

It can be ordered from UMI's European representatives, Information Publications International Ltd, The Old Hospital, Ardingly Road, Cuckfield, West Sussex RH17 5JR. UMI Order no. OP73481 AMATT, L K: Bibliography of locks, price US \$111.80. This is for a softback Xerox reprint (not an original copy); for hardback, please add US \$6 per binding. This price includes shipping and handling. However, all local sales and import taxes are the sole responsibility

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## Inside This Issue

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## Wolverhampton Library books

**W**olverhampton Library Archives and Local Studies contains a remarkable group of books on locks which are listed below. Indeed, there cannot be many other libraries where so many can be seen together on the open shelves. They are for reference only and may be consulted after you have provided proof of identity. This fine collection is located in Snow Hill, opposite the Central Library. Of course the British Library Reference Division is unrivalled, but there the books are not on open access and have to be ordered; there is a limit to the number which may be consulted at a time. Perhaps the only disappointment at Wolverhampton is that, unlike at Birmingham Reference Library, there is no large stock of manufacturers' catalogues. In fact, the only such catalogue is a slim Chubb's of 1984.



- ALLMAN, Geoff One hundred years of keymaking. Wolverhampton, Arthur Hough, 1982.
- BUTTER, Francis Antique locks. Willenhall, Josiah Parkes, 1955.
- An encyclopaedia of locks and builders hardware. Willenhall, Josiah Parkes, 1968.
- Locks and builders hardware: glossary, design, manufacture and history. Willenhall, Josiah Parkes, 1948.
- Locks and lockmaking. Pitman, 1926.
- CHUBB, John On the construction of locks and keys. London, 1850.
- CHUBB & SONS Catalogue of locks, safes, boxes. London, 1912.
- CURRER-BRIGGS, Noel Contemporary observations on security from the Chubb Collectanea 1818-1968. London, Chubb & Sons, 1968.
- HODGSON, Edmund A short popular treatise on locks. Spon, [c.1870].
- HOGG, Gary Safe bind, safe find. London, Phoenix House, 1961.
- PRICE, George A treatise on fire and thief-proof depositories and locks and keys. London, 1856.
- A treatise on gunpowder-proof locks, gunpowder-proof lock chambers, drill-proof safes, &c. London, 1860.
- WALTERS, Philip The Wolverhampton lock trade. Birmingham, 1864.
- John Millington*

## Read all about it (continued from p.1)

of the purchaser. Prepayment will be required. This can be made, for example, by credit card, stating name and address of cardholder; name, number, and expiry date of card; or by US dollar or Sterling cheque. Please make cheques payable to UMI, and allow 4-5 weeks for delivery. There are discounts available for multiple copies: 5-9 = 15%; 10-19 = 30%; 20-49 = 40%; 50+ = 45%. IPI can supply an order form if buyers send them a sae.

Another guide is Price's book, *A treatise on Fire and thiefproof depositories and locks and keys*, Simpkin Marshal 1856. This set out to be a book on safes, but was expanded to cover locks also. Eventually it grew to include most of the locks invented up to the time of its publication. It was probably printed on power driven presses, on machine-made paper, and would have been bound by hand. The print run would have been quite small, possibly not much more than a thousand copies. Today it is understandably scarce, and copies which occasionally come on the market, at rather more than the original one guinea, are eagerly sought. A German translation was made almost immediately.

Reprinting this book is quite possible. Unfortunately, at 972 pages, and a limited demand, the price would inevitably be high.

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Some of the material for these newsletters comes from old publications. Some of these - especially magazines - were originally poorly printed on paper which was often poor. Machine-made paper appeared in the early years of the nineteenth century, and was widely used for periodicals. Its surface was often poor, and often off-white. Foxing is sometimes now a problem. Regrettably, some original material does not reproduce well, and achieving correct contrast between text and illustrations is also sometimes difficult. The Editor asks the indulgence of readers for this problem.



**In future issues:** a feature on Cotterill locks; and articles on moneyboxes and handcuffs.

## Books on locks in the British Library Reference Division



CHUBB AND SON

Chubb's Patent Locks and Fire-Proof Safes. A catalogue.  
Chubb & Son: London, 1863. fol.

BRAMAH AND CO.

The Bramah Locks. Extracts from the press, dated 4 Sept.  
1851-1 March 1854. pp. 22. London, 1854. 8o.

BRAMAH (Joseph)

A Dissertation on the Construction of Locks, etc. pp. 46.  
pl. 2. Printed for the Author: London, 1785? 8o.

BRAMAH (Joseph)

The Petition and Case of Joseph Bramah, of Piccadilly,  
Engineer, inventor of the patent locks for the security of  
life and property. pp. 5. London, 1798. fol.

ERAS (Vincent J. M.)

Locks and keys throughout the ages. Folkestone: Bailey and  
Swinfen, 1974. ISBN 0 561 00223 1

pp. 176; illus. 27 cm.

FOX (Augustus Henry Lane) afterwards RIVERS (Augustus  
Henry Lane Fox Pitt)

On the development and distribution of primitive Locks and  
Keys ... Illustrated by specimens in the Pitt-Rivers  
Collection. pp. 31. Chatto and Windus: London, 1883. 4o.

HOBBS (A. C.) of New York

Locks and Safes. The construction of locks; compiled from  
the papers of A. C. Hobbs, ... and edited by C. Tomlinson.  
... To which is added a description of ... J. B. Fenby's  
patent locks, and a note upon iron safes. By R. Mallet.  
London, 1868.

12o.

No. 83\*\* of "Weale's Rudimentary Series."

DENISON (Edmund Beckett) afterwards BECKETT (Edmund)  
Baron Grimthorpe

Clocks and Locks. From the "Encyclopaedia Britannica."  
Second edition; with a full account of the Great Clock at  
Westminster. With illustrations. pp. x. 236. Adam & Charles  
Black: Edinburgh, 1857. 8o.

HOBBS (A. C.) of New York

Rudimentary treatise on the construction of Locks from materials furnished by A. C. Hobbs, compiled by G. Dodd, and edited by C. Tomlinson. London, 1853.

Lindsay, John Seymour

An anatomy of English wrought iron. -- Tiranti, 1964.  
60p., 165 plates, 26cm. -- (Chapters in art series; vol. 40)

KLEMM (Scott J.)

The history of locks and key. An annotated bibliography. Rialto, California, 1973.

pp. 6. 22 cm.  
Duplicated.

NEW YORK General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen

The Lure of the Lock. A short treatise on locks, to elucidate the John M. Mossman Collection of locks in the Museum of the ... Society ... including some of the "Mossman Papers" ... By Albert A. Hopkins. pp. ix. 246. New York, 1928. 80.

QUINCEY (Harcourt)

Ship builders', brassfoundry, locks and ironmongery. Engravings of articles, etc. London, 1854.

obl. 40.

YALE (Linus)

A dissertation on locks and lockpicking, showing the advantages attending the use of the magic infallible bank lock, the ... safe lock, and the patent door lock, invented by L. Y., etc. Philadelphia, 1856. 80.

Locksmithing: From Apprentice to Master. (Rathjen, Joseph E.) 24cm. 416. 200ill. Paperback. McGraw : Sep 94 £20.95 0 07 051645 6

Complete Book of Locks and Locksmithing. (Roper, C.A.) 23cm. 360. 737ill. 3r.e. of "Complete Handbook of Locks and Locksmithing" Paperback. TAB Bks, US : Feb 91 £17.95 (at 01/94) 0 8306 3522 X

Professional Locksmithing Techniques. (Phillips, Bill) 23cm. 400. 200ill. Paperback. TAB Bks, US : Feb 91 £24.95 (at 01/94) 0 8306 3523 8

Professional Locksmithing. (Robinson, Robert L.) 26cm. xv, 399. Ill. n.e. Cloth. Nelson Hall Publishers, US : Dec 83 £56.50 (at 03/93) 0 911012 15

Gentle, Rupert

Domestic metalwork, 1640-1820 / Rupert Gentle and Rachael Feild. -- [New ed.] / revised and enlarged by Belinda Gentle. -- Woodbridge : Antique Collectors' Club, 1994.

Previous ed.: published as English domestic brass. London : Elek, 1975. -- Includes bibliographies and index. 461p : ill (some col.) facsimils ; 29cm

ISBN 1-85149-187-2. -- ISBN 1-85149-187-2 : £45.00 :

## Questions from readers

**W**rite 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.



6] Dowson any information on the safe-George



Trevor would like information or logues on makers Withers,

Samual Withers, and Thomas Withers, who had separate businesses in West Bromwich. Also the safemaker Bash & Co, in business in Glasgow c.1874 - 1911.

7] Robert Barron patented the lever lock on 27th May 1774. Many writers have since claimed that he did not invent the 'lever lock' as we know it, since the lever gatings were in the bolt lath and not in the levers themselves. His patent, however, covers both methods of construction. Barron had high expectations of his invention, believing that 1 lever would make the lock secure, so used 2 to make it absolutely certain. At that time, the tentative method of lock picking was not known, but it was soon found that 2 levers were not impossible to overcome. Is it possible that Barron chose his method of construction because it made a much stronger lock? And has anyone encountered a Barron lock with more than 2 levers?



8] Peter been provide on each tion of safe cially



Hall has asked to information of a collec-some 200 plates, espe-dates/ori-gins; any information would be helpful.

Please see the list on page 6.

1] I have never heard that any others laid any claim to the invention of the 'moveable stump', which Hobbs patented in 1852. It was found later that his patent was the last lock patent of the 'Old Series', valid only for 14 years, until 1866. Other makers then adopted the principle - Chatwood called his, stronger, version, the 'Safety Lever'. I am told that a circular lock, made for the M.O.D. still uses the movable stump, but don't know of any other which is still in production. (Victorian spelling was moveable; later the *e* was dropped.)

*Peter Cowie.*

[Does anyone know anything more about this circular lock?]

5] The Hobbs company had several name changes in its early years - see Hobbs Hart & Co. Ltd *A century of lockmaking: 1851-1951.*

The company started in 1851, and was formally registered as Hobbs & Co. in 1852; but by 1855 had become Hobbs, Ashley & Co. Soon the name changed to Hobbs, Ashley & Fortescue, at 97 Cheapside. It is not clear whether they moved, or Cheapside altered, but the address for some ninety years was 76 Cheapside, London.

Hobbs never intended to stay in England, and when Ashley died in 1860, Hobbs had no difficulty disposing of a thriving business to John Mathias Hart. It is not known if he was any relation to Thomas Hart, or if either was related to William Albert Hart, who was a Director from 1908-1910.

Hobbs had stipulated that his name should always head the company, so it became Hobbs, Hart & Co. in 1860. Hart died in 1887 and the firm became a Limited Company. Hobbs retained an interest in the company; he returned in 1872 to celebrate the 21st Anniversary - held at the Crystal Palace, by then moved to Sydenham.

Alfred Hobbs died in November 1891; Hobbs Hart & Co. Ltd became part of the Chubb Company in 1956.

*Peter Cowie*

[See page 7 for some patent abstracts; Hobbs' patent for the movable bolt-stump has been held over for lack of space, and will appear in a later issue. *Ed.*]



I have been asked to provide info on each of a collection of some 200 safe plates giving possible dates/origins. Any gen on the following would help.

J. SU-ALL & Co.	Lumby, Sons & Wood Ltd. Halifax.	George Cooper. London.
F.G.Griffin & Co. Dudley.	The Crusader Brand. Modern Steel Safe.	Gallet. 66 Blvd Magenta, Paris.
The London Safe. 'Excelsior'	The Dart Safe Co. West Bromwich.	A.Webley & Co. Bradford St. Birmingham.
C.H.Griffiths & Sons 43 Cannon St. E.C.	Dreadnought. Bent Steel F.R.Safe.	Thos Kimm & Co. Birmingham.
Fabrik. Eiserner. Geldschranke.	E.Hipkins & Co. Dudley.	S.F.Turner. Wellington Works, Dudley
J & F.Smith. Blackacre, Dudley.	C.S.P.Wood & Co. Birmingham.	W.Diaper. Cambridge Heath. London.
Whitfield's. Birmingham.	W.Marr. 67 Cannon St. London.	Thomas Turner & Co. 'Premium' Safe.
McKenna, Morris & Co. Vulcan Safe Works. Bham.	Cooke's (Finsbury) Ltd. London.	Harrison & Co. Lord St. Liverpool.
Richard M.Lord. Wolverhampton.	Thos. Skidmore. Wolverhampton.	Sentry Safes. West Bromwich.
H.Bien. Berlin.	George Titterton. Birmingham.	S.Mordan & Co. London.
Bank Melli. Iran.	Leadbeaters. Aldersgate, London.	Birmingham Safe Co. Birmingham.
Kings. 'Impregnable' Shoreditch, London.	Hamilton & Co. London. Makers to Royal Mint.	William Giles. Sedgley, Staffs.
W.E.Brain. Birmingham.	Sicker Safe Co. Birmingham.	H.Rantcliffe. Vulcan Works. Bham.
C.Harding & Sons. London.	D.Taylor & Co. late with Milner. Lpool.	James Dix Cambridge Rd. London.
J & J.W.Mallalieu Ltd. Mill St. Manchester.	Edward Tann. Hackney Rd. London.	'Trusty' Est. 1837. London Make.
T.McRoy & Son. Oldham Rd. Manchester.	J.L.Lawrence. Birmingham.	Jas Parrish. 180 Goswell Rd. London.
Phillips & Son. <u>London.</u>	A.M.Coleman & Co Chancery Lane, London.	Telle Safe Co. London.
James Gibbons. Fisher St. London.	Samson. F.R. Safe. British Make.	Wat. Tyler. Safeman. London.
"Baffle". Improved F.P. Safe.	Follows & Bates. Gorton, Manchester.	

## Patent

A.D. 1778, October 31.—N° 1200.

**BARRON, ROBERT.**—This invention relates to the construction of a lock which the inventor states is "far more secure than any hitherto made." It is described as follows:—

"An improvement on the tumbler and spring by means of a stub or projection so exactly fitted to a passage or opening in the bolt as not to permit the bolt to pass unless the said projection or stub is carried exactly opposite the opening or passage in the bolt, which can only be done by its proper key. As the said projection or stub is at liberty to pass the said passage or opening in the bolt in another direction at the end of said passage or opening by placing the projection or stub on the bolt, and having the passage or opening in the tumbler or spring, the same security may be obtained. One, two, three, or more of said tumblers and springs may be us'd in the same lock, and may be of different sizes, so that the part which comes in contact with the key at the time of opening or shutting the lock may unequally distant from the centre of the pipe or pin of the key, and which will admit of many different forms in what is called the bit of the key."

[Printed, 4d. No Drawings. See *Mechanics' Magazine*, vol. 7, p. 232; also vol. 30, p. 71; *Engineers' and Mechanics' Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, p. 104.]

A.D. 1779, May 28.—N° 1226.

**HENRY, SOLOMON.**—This invention relates to "apparatus to act as a universal lock or bolt for fastening doors or openings of all kinds whatsoever, and which apparatus is so constructed

"as to render it impossible for any person either to pick or open the same, unless they have the key thereunto belonging, the whole of which being upon a principle new and advantageous."

The apparatus as described and exhibited is adapted to a street or warehouse door, and to padlocks. As regards the former, it is fixed in the middle of the door and is capable of shooting six bolts, three on each side. It is furnished with a receiver into which a detector ball, put into the pipe of the lock or bolt, falls when a pick-lock or other instrument has been applied. There is also fitted in the pipe of the lock a piece of leather so cut and contrived, that if any impression is attempted to be taken of the wards by means of a smoked blank, the latter could not be passed in without being smeared. "The wards of these locks and bolts (upper and under) cover each other, and thereby and by means of an irregular ratchet serpentine ward," prevent the passing into them of pick-lock keys or other instruments.

A desk lock fitted with a receiver is exhibited on the drawing. Padlocks are described and shown fitted with a receiver for the detector ball, the serpentine ratchet and other wards; a guard which covers the key hole or pipe is opened by a spring catch; a loose bit with wards is jointed to the key, which bit falls when the key is inserted in the lock; a number of key hole pipes, varying in internal configuration are shown; the handle of the key is fitted with a bit for opening the spring catch, and the keys are fitted with a tubular cap to cover the loose wards, which cap when the key is about to be used, is made in some cases to form a handle inserting it partly through an eye formed at the end of the key saank.

[Printed, 10d. Drawing.]

## abstracts

A.D. 1851, December 8.—N° 13,852.

**RESTELL, THOMAS.**—This invention relating to locks and other fastenings, has for its object perfect security combined with simplicity of construction and moderate cost. The security of the locks and the peculiarities in their manufacture consisting:—

1st. In constructing "the keyhole in such a manner that not more than one instrument can be introduced into the lock at one time; and further, that if any instrument other than the proper key be introduced, and turned partly round, it will meet with an obstruction as usual in all combination locks, but cannot be withdrawn therefrom until all the internal parts have been brought back into their natural position. This will effectually prevent any person from feeling where all the obstructions lie, and will consequently give him no opportunity of dealing with them. I effect this object by surrounding the spindle of the keyhole with a cylindrical curtain or guard, combined with a circular plate or shield, these parts being constructed in such a manner in relation to the internal parts as to effectually prevent the introduction of more than one instrument at a time. The circular plate or shield is secured to the top of the cylindrical curtain, so that when the key or other instrument is introduced and turned round in the keyhole, the circular plate or shield is carried round inside the lock, and covers up the hole, and thereby prevents the introduction of a second instrument."

2nd. "The employment of pins, studs, or projecting points adapted either to the circular shield or other part of the lock, whereby the key may be prevented from being turned in the wrong direction."

3rd. The use in locks of a movable plate and a bit or pin, whereby the position of the latter may be so changed in relation to the notches in the tumblers, or vice versa, and also so changed in regard to the combined arrangement of the other parts of the lock, as to render the original key useless or incapable of opening it.

4th. "Constructing the bolt with a tooth, pin, or projecting point at its lower edge . . . which, by bearing against the sides of the cylindrical shield, circular plate, or other suitable part, will prevent the bolt from being shot until a suitable notch, cavity, or opening made for the purpose in the said cylindrical shield, circular plate, or other part is brought round so that the tooth, pin, or projecting point on the bolt may enter therein, and allow the bolt to be moved."

5th. The use of a movable plate and bridge piece or bracket for the purpose (as applied to a Bramah lock) of changing the relative position of certain of the parts.

6th. "Constructing the tumblers . . . with an additional notch at the end, into which a pin, secured to the bolt, will enter, upon applying force or pressure thereto, and by thus holding all the tumblers will prevent any of them from being raised until the bolt is thrown back again."

7th. "The use of a protector tumbler . . . which tumbler is by means of a pin connected to the circular shield, kept raised too high to allow the bolt to be shot, and cannot be allowed to descend until the circular plate is moved round, and the keyhole closed."

8th. "Constructing a mortice tumbler lock, which can be opened by the key from either side, the keyhole being protected with double shields."

9th. The method shewn and described . . . of constructing tumbler latches."

[Printed, 1s. Drawings. See *London Journal (Newton's)*, vol. 41 (continued series), p. 161; *Mechanics' Magazine*, vol. 36, p. 490.]

# The last hatchet job - Solomon Henry

**A** hinged bit key dating from late eighteenth, or more likely, early nineteenth, century, survives in some numbers. Regretably, what it fits has survived in far smaller numbers.

Early latches were of wood, later iron, gravity operated. In time, the simplest forms were replaced by more artistic and skilfully made iron latches with gravity replaced by a spring. Their purpose was only to keep the door shut, not to provide security. A bolt or drawer-bar, or on a larger scale, drop-bar, would provide that on the inside.

These iron latches were called long, or, from their shape, hatchet latches.



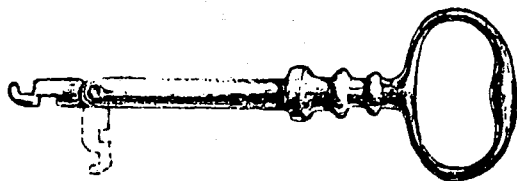
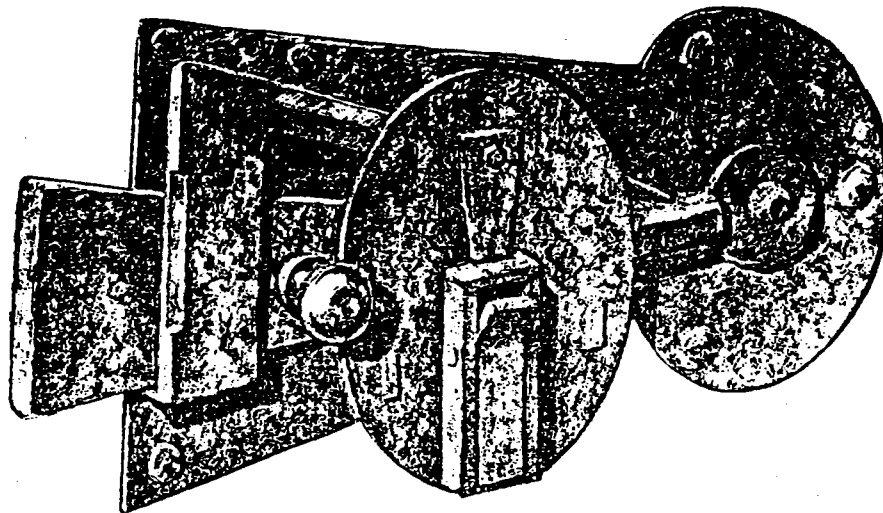
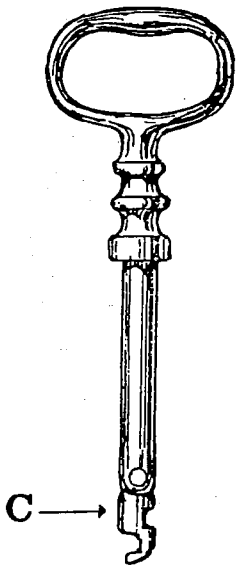
In 1779 Solomon Henry obtained Patent

Number 1226. One of the inventions he claimed is the bit loosely pivoted to the key, fitting into a keyhole pipe.

Incidentally, a somewhat similar idea was later used in some Wormald padlocks; in these the keybit was pivoted into the keystem, and extended rather in the nature of an expanding bit.

Henry provided key operation from outside for the simple lift-up latch. This was the end of the line for the hatchet latch. Demand for increasing numbers of simple door latches led to simplification and mass production, eventually ending with the rectangular Victorian latch of rolled iron or steel, its parts stamped out of sheet, bent in a press, and riveted in a press. These latches were then mostly relegated to interior doors.

*R. Phillips*



SECTION OF TUMBLER-BIT LATCH

- A. Buffer
- B. Buffer spring
- C. Bit
- D. Wards
- E. Key tube

