



# LOCKS & KEYS



Issue 5

The Newsletter for lock collectors

March 1998

## Collecting

**M**y thanks especially to Richard Hopkins for a sheaf of periodical articles of which I was unaware.

Most of them are too long to reproduce in full in the *Newsletter*. Instead I shall give references, and you can ask for them in your library.

There are not many books or periodical articles on collecting locks. Most earlier writers, moreover, were more interested in art than technology. *Apollo* and *Connoisseur* are both periodicals for fine art connoisseurs. Those who would collect locks or keys after reading their articles would need deep pockets indeed. Many of those discussed could only be found in museums.

We should not wish to encourage today's collectors to imitate Marie Corbin, an American key collector. In 1901 she confessed to having ravaged many lands in quest of treasured souvenirs. She let nothing short of stealing stand in the way of her obtaining specimens.

One of the most frequent requests is for information, especially in print. The range of books and articles which might be of interest to lock collectors is very wide and varied. Some articles on collecting are listed inside.

"Locks & Keys" needs more subscribers!

## Keys in art

**A** Many years ago I read a fascinating book on the history of woodworking tools, and learnt a number of interesting facts. For instance, it is probable that the average Roman joiner had a more extensive and specialised tool kit than his medieval counterpart in a French or English village a thousand years later.

This statement was made on the basis of remains of both tools and the actual wooden structures, furniture, and other wooden objects from different periods.

### Value of literary evidence

For the Middle Ages, however, although we can be sure from the woodwork of the period that certain tools were in use, very few examples of the tools have survived. We have to rely on literary evidence, pictures, stained-glass windows and other similar clues. Paintings of the Holy Family were widespread. For the woodworker much may be learned from a study of these paintings, as contemporary settings were used to show Joseph's workshop.

### Artists tried to give an accurate view

Similarly, I believe that keys depicted in old pictures can be used as an indication of the styles in use when the picture was produced. Impressionism had not been discovered, so artists tried to give an accurate view of the subjects they were portraying.

### Pictures should not be used as precise guides to age

Remember how long a key can remain in use, the relative lack of variety in everyday locks, and that keys were not the principle focus of *continued on p.2*

## Inside This Issue

1 *Keys in art*

3 *An unusual lock*

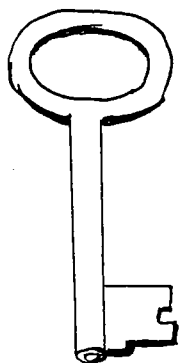
5 *For Sale & Wanted / Bibliography*

6 *Questions*

7 *Twopeny plain*

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## Keys in art (continued from p.1)



The Holy Family  
Saenredam  
c1590 ?French?  
Two or three similar hanging  
from waist

the pictures. We should not, therefore, use works of art as precise guides to dating keys even though the same painting may be used as a reference for tools, fashion, cosmetics, and lifestyle.

In heraldry, the keys of St Peter tend to be depicted, as are many other subjects, e.g. lions, in a stylised form. There is some variation but they generally look the same from Italy, through Germany and into the British Isles.

The paintings I have noticed, however, do show some variation, suggesting that the artist used a contemporary key as his model.

The examples shown are nearly all from the sixteenth century. They exhibit considerable detail and variety and might persuade you to pay more attention when next visiting your local museum and art gallery. I copied them from books in the library so must apologise for any artistic errors, as I am no draughtsman.

Another place where keys occur is as the date-mark on early hammered coinage in England in 1596/6, 1597/8, and again in 1609/10. These are obviously stylised, but the 1597/8 example looks very much like the 'French Latch' pattern. Has anyone any views on this?

### Some illuminated manuscripts show keys

Another source of old illustrations is illuminated manuscripts. Many of these have small pictures incorporated in the borders, and sometimes the capitals are decorated with scenes from everyday life.

In the example shown, a monk is filling a wine or beer jug while he samples a bowlful. The keys are hanging from his finger as he quaffs. Presumably, as the cellarer, he was required to see that stocks of beverages were kept safe, and care of the keys was an essential part of his duties. I cannot date the manuscript, but it is probably from the thirteenth or early fourteenth century, from the collection in the British Library.

Should anyone be encouraged to scour the art galleries for further examples, perhaps they could copy the keys, together with the relevant details of the picture, date, artist, location, etc., and write another article for the *Newsletter* to update this one.

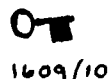
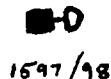
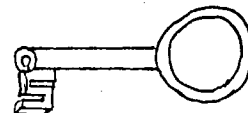
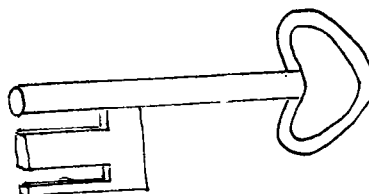
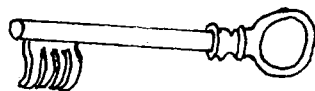
*Richard Hopkins*



The Burial of Count Orgaz  
El Greco  
Spanish 1586

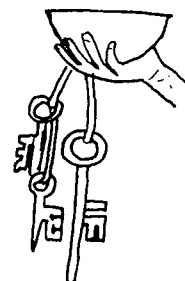
The Peasant Dance  
Peter Breughel  
Dutch c 1566

Garden of Earthly Delights  
Heironymus Bosch  
Dutch 1500



### Date stamps on English hammered coins

Melancholia  
Durer  
German c1514  
Bunch of keys hang from waist  
Some detail of bits obscured by  
folds of clothing



AFTERTHOUGHT  
FROM  
ILLUMINATED  
MANUSCRIPT.

## An unusual lock

**I** have acquired an unusual lock, and describe it in the hope that someone might be able to cast some light on its history.

At first sight it looks to be a mortice lock with an oddly shaped keyhole. Apart from the front and back plates and plug cap, it can be assembled or dismantled with just a hammer and a punch.

My attempt at dismantling it stopped at the top bolt thrower that looks as if it is intended to be a permanent fixture. This has a slot, as if it is intended to use the tailpiece of a normal pin cylinder, across the top of a top-hat shaped hollow plug. The plug has two 3mm slots from top to bottom. The thrower that it operates must have been inserted into the case and the plug pushed in afterwards. The thrower is like a large washer with a lug to work the bolt and two studs that fit the slots of the plug. Pressure has at some time been applied to keep these parts in place, which makes it difficult to remove these items without possible damage - so I stopped.

### Unusual cylinder

The rest of the components are not exciting, fairly conventional in fact, until we come to the unusual pin tumbler cylinder.

This is set vertically below the previously mentioned thrower assembly and has at first glance, four sets of pins in a cruciform pattern. The keyhole is also different as the two long slots, around a circular central hole, are not of the same width.

We find that the top and bottom pins of the cruciform arrangement are actually wards to obstruct the passage of a false key. They are just pins driven into the plug and go beneath the surface of the plug, presumably short so that they would not snag the bolt or lockcase if they are forced outwards during an attempt at opening without the key. They just clear the line of the main pins and are nearer one end of the plug than the other, again to avoid the bolt.

The plug has its own thrower, held in by two pins that are easily driven out once the plug cap is removed. Because the thrower is mounted centrally on the plug, the four pins are placed two on each side, with the two ward pins one at top and one at the

bottom.

An interesting point about the plug is that the holes for the pins on both sides do not pass all the way through. The drilling has stopped at the edge of the central hole so pins will not pass all the way through the plug. This is in hindsight an obvious practical point, but one that might be missed when making a plug with pin holes opposite one another as it increases the manufacturing time and cost.

The holes for the plugs and springs are drilled from the backplate end and closed by staked steel plugs, one of which was loose but firm while the other was really solid.

### Dismantling

Dismantling, as is so often the case, was easy once I found a small pin punch for the plug thrower. Picking the plug required a forked tension tool that fitted in the push pin holes used to fix the thrower. A wide tool might have done but as the two sides needed attention simultaneously, I took the easy way out. Reassembly was not quite as simple. I had to make a 'C' shaped follower from steel shim as the plug dimensions did not fit any of my regular tools. Once this problem had been overcome everything else was easy, just a matter of knocking in pins and doing up a few small screws.

### Brass or bronze

The plug and front plate seem to be brass, whilst the case and end plate look redder when the surface discoloration is scratched, so I think they are bronze. The bolt however has no discoloration and is strong reddish, almost coppery colour, and my guess is that it might be a phosphor bronze. The remaining components seem to be conventional springs and pins that would be expected in any such lock. The drivers had been left with a slight projection when parted from their stock bar. This spur fitted in the bottom of the spring when in the case.

From surface pitting and scratch marks I think that the case might have been formed as a casting rather than cut off a slab. Stamped into one side of the case are the marks  $D=55mm$ , while on the end plate just below the two screw holes (but omitted from the drawing) are the figures 40086.

Any information that can be given about

## Unusual lock (continued from p.3)

this lock will be most gratefully received. Did apprentices make (invent?) items during training to gain experience, or were they schooled solely in the tasks required

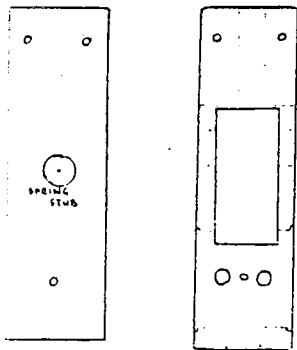
by their employers? If they did invent items could this be a one-off? It would be nice to know.

*Richard Hopkins*

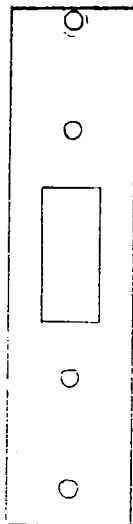
A	case	77.5 long	62.4 wide	17.9 thick
B	end plate	62.0	17.7	2.2
C	front plate	98.9	22.0	3.5
D	bolt	76.5	24.8	11.2
E	plug	19.1 diam. of lip 17.0 diam. of plug		1.1 thickness of lip
F	plug cap	19.1 diam.		1.1 thick
G	bolt pin head	13.4	3.0 diam.	tapered point, swollen
H	plug follower pins	14.2	2.0 diam.	slight taper point
I	pins	5.75 6.36 5.4 4.77	3.0 diam.	
J	drivers	8.0 overall	7.0 main body	3.0 diam.
K	springs	11.0 overall	2.9 diam.	

END VIEW OF BODY

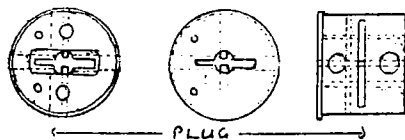
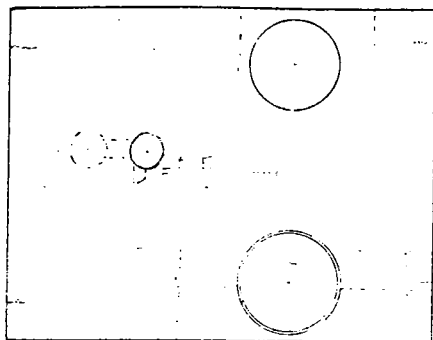
END PLATE



FRONT PLATE



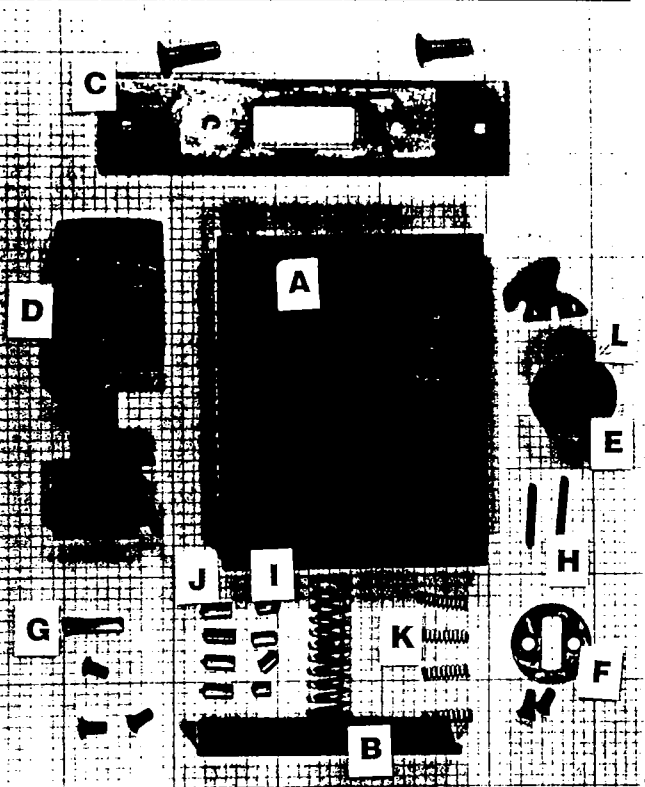
BODY



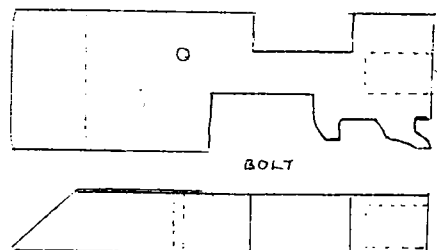
PLUG CAP



THROWER



BOLT PIN



BOLT

## For Sale

Hobbs Violence lock, 18"; also a Hobbs back chamber lock. These came from a strongroom of a London bank building, believed to be a Barclays branch from the 1930's. Robert Taylor, 78 Buckwood Rd, Markyate, St Albans, Herts AL3 8JE; 01582 841799.



Paul Prescott has a spiralbound photocopy of PRICE *Treatise on fire & thief-proof depositories and locks and keys*, 1856. £30 + postage. 20 Cambridge Crescent, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP13 7ND tel/fax 01494 446692.

## Wanted

Pre-eighteenth century keys: Daniel J Julius would like to buy. 91 Mount Muir Crescent, San Rafael, California, 94903 USA; telephone: 415 499 9145; fax 415 422 6890.



Paul Prescott has a Tucker's Holdfast lock with a damaged barrel & curtain. This is not just a pick-resisting device, it is an essential operating component of the lock. Paul would like a complete lock in working order, or the loan of one so that he can make a copy of a servicable component for his lock. 20 Cambridge Crescent, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP13 7ND tel/fax 01494 446692.



Andrew Self seeks any information on Bramah locks, such as old price lists and catalogues, and any specific publications. 63 Church Street Huntly Aberdeenshire AB54 5AW telephone 01466 794974.



## Thanks

Thanks are due to Arthur Hough & Sons Ltd, Brownshore Lane, Essington, Wolverhampton, for help with this issue. Hough is Britain's largest producer of original and replacement keys, and since 1881 has made keys for all the largest makers of locks - and many smaller ones.

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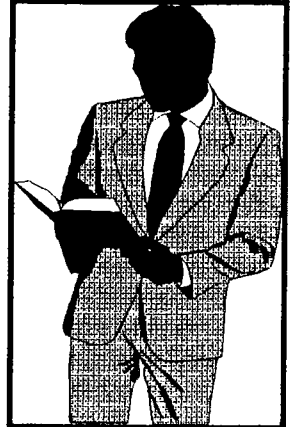
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## Questions from readers

**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.



11] Can anyone supply information on this padlock? It is 6.5" x 4.5", with a smaller padlock locking the hasp covering the keyhole. It appears to be made of steel (or possibly iron, much pitted - Ed.). Neither lock is marked, but the large key looks to be a Barron key. It was obtained in Scotland.

*Stuart Allenby*

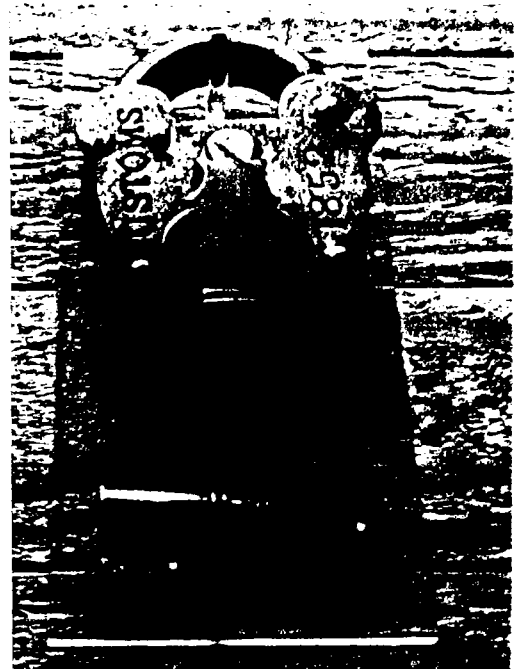
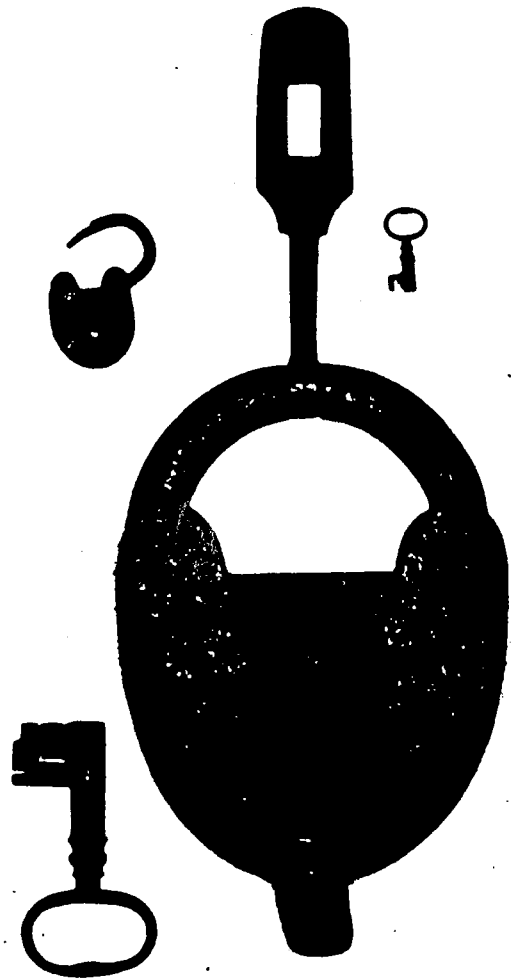
11] Robert Barron patented the lever lock on 27th May 1774. The company was still making them at least as late as the 1850's. As the patent had expired, anybody could make the same kind of lock, and there are certainly unmarked locks of this type. The Customs used various padlocks in the nineteenth century, including some seal padlocks.

The Customs Museum in the Maritime Museum, Liverpool, has a display of padlocks (see pictures). One (11) marked '1845' appears to be a Barron, with a coined key. Another, (12) is marked 'Barrons Patent' on the brass escutcheon and 'Customs 1852' on the iron body. These illustrations are from colour photographs taken of the locks in a display case.

In the past, some discarded locks escaped. For some decades, however, Customs & Excise has enforced a policy of destroying withdrawn padlocks of the types used in bonded stores.

*Richard Phillips*

*Richard Hopkins*



## Twopeny plain

**W**illiam Twopeny was a nineteenth century antiquarian from Rochester, who was buried in the church in Rochester which my school attended.

### Antiquarian

Twopeny was a lawyer by profession, but he was also an artist of considerable merit. Over a long life, he made a large series of drawings. They are now bound in thirteen folios and several smaller volumes, which are in what is now the British Library Reference Division. This is in course of transfer to the new building at St Pancras. In the earlier part of the nineteenth century Twopeny recorded much architecture, furniture, woodwork, and ironwork. A considerable part of what he drew had already been demolished or had disappeared by the beginning of this century.

### Diligent artist

Architectural drawings tend to cold precision. Artists tend to be picturesque or romantic. Twopeny, by contrast, is a patient artist drawing for the craftsman. He captures both detail and texture, as if for a craftsman's use. Much of what he drew was made by craftsmen of a more leisured age, before mass-production was everywhere rampant. What Twopeny recorded was original art and craft, before Wiliam Morris' revival movement. We should also admire the energy of Twopeny, who lived much of his life in London. He ranged the length and breadth of the land. Even after his death, most of the country still travelled at less than 10mph, and often only 3 or 4mph. Few roads in the country were paved, or wider than fourteen feet, or

straight. Since the end of the last century we have lost 90% of our woodlands and 60% of our hedges. Twopeny's perseverance in even finding some of the places he visited is commendable.

### Publication

Early in the twentieth century, the Assistant Keeper of the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum Library arranged for photolitho copies of some of the metalwork illustrations to be published as a book, to which he contributed a gentle and sympathetic Preface\*.

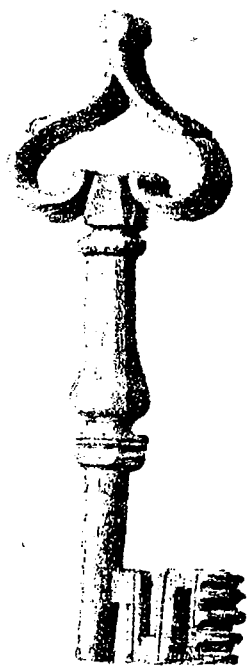
### More pictures

A further volume, of woodwork studies, was contemplated. However, the Great War intervened, and no further Twopeny drawings have been published since. Twopeny published a few specimens of woodwork and architecture as engravings in 1859, but the production did not do justice to the pencil drawings. Reproduction here does them even less justice; and unfortunately, very little is known about most of the subjects of the drawings.

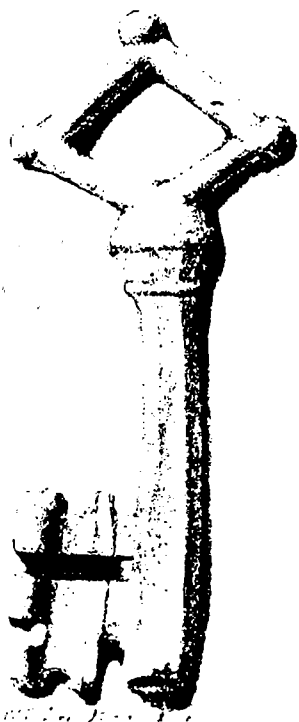
TWOPENY, William *English metal work ninety-three drawings*, with a preface by Laurence Binyon. London, Archibald Constable, 1904.

\* He later gained a reputation as an art historian, especially oriental, and had a substantial literary output of books and articles on art; poetry; essays; and dramas. He served as a stretcher-bearer on the Western Front in the Great War. Today Laurence Binyon is known only for one quatrain of a 1914 ode which was set to music by Parry. *For the fallen* was quoted on war memorials throughout Britain, and the Empire.

Richard Phillips



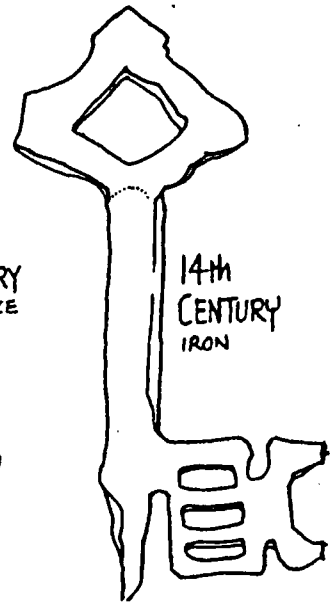
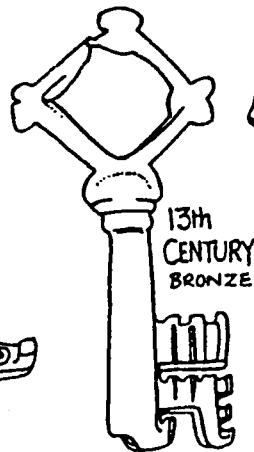
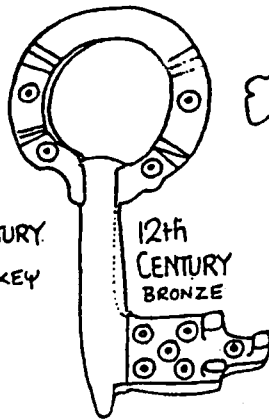
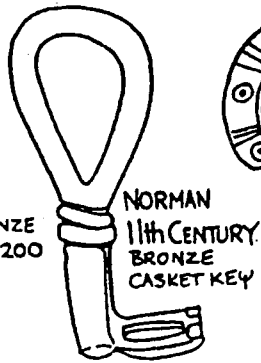
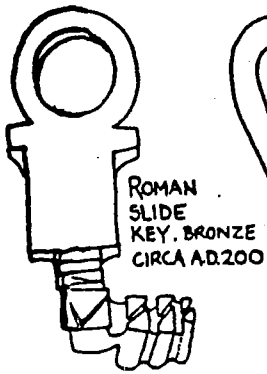
W.7. 746/1825 1859.



PADLOCK, THIRSK CHURCH, YORKS.



COPPER KEY, FOUND AT CAMER, MEOPHAM, KENT.



KEY, French, 16th century.



KEY OF WINDSOR CASTLE,  
made for Mary II,  
English, 17th century.

