

From Locks to Spanners

As well as making locks, the Hodson family also had a stampings business.

In fact, many of these items were actually forgings - a drop forge was situated in what is now the Education Room at the museum.

They produced many components as part of the war effort in the First World War, including parts for aircraftmen's harness and into the 1920s they continued to make barrack bed bolts and later, as described in Newsletter 1, they made parts for door catches for New World Gas Cookers.

During the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s there was an almost continuous stream of orders for spanners. These appear to have been small spanners which were forged by Edgar Hodson and returned in an unfinished state to Thomas Smith & Sons of Saltley, Birmingham who were drop forgers and well-known for their Snail Brand spanners.



After hearing of these activities from the archive, Andy the locksmith at the museum, came across some pieces of metal in a dark corner of the workshop - and they turned out to be the actual dies and other tooling used by Edgar Hodson for making spanners.

On closer examination of the dies, we could make out the Snail Brand trademark.



the
**Locksmith's
House**



Archive newsletter

Update on the archive

We have a name-change! Since our last newsletter, work continues on the Hodson Archive, but the project now also encompasses all the archive collections which were donated to the Locksmith's House in the past.

Volunteers (some of whom have been 'in post' since Spring 2007), continue to attend every Monday to help sort, clean, catalogue and re-package the archive. A large section of the Hodson Business Archive - that is the loose business papers dating from 1907-1970 - is now catalogued and searchable on our database.

The attention of the group is currently focused on cleaning and cataloguing the older papers, from the Hodson Business Archive (1866-1906), and the 'Parkes' Competitors' Files' - actually the contents of several filing cabinets where Josiah Parkes and Sons Ltd - who made Union Locks kept information about their competitors in the lock and hardware industries. This information includes catalogues, correspondence and reports about locks made by rival companies both at home and abroad - from their nearest neighbours in Willenhall to far-away Australia and Japan.

On the days when the volunteers are not present the archivist has been working on the remainder of the collection including other papers and photographs from Josiah Parkes, Yale, Century Locks, Newhall Locks, T Morgan & Sons Ltd, ETAS, A & E Morgan, and several of the smaller lock manufacturers of the area.



The volunteer archive team outside the Locksmith's House.



the Locksmith's House

The Locksmith's House is a perfect venue for group visits where parties can enjoy the Victorian House and workshop, with its nationally significant collection of locks and keys

Pre-booked parties can take a guided tour in gas-lit rooms, soak up the atmosphere and hear the clatter of belt driven machinery in the workshop.

The Locksmith's House is only open for pre-arranged group bookings. To book your visit call: **0121 520 8054**

Open Day

Free Admission on:
**Saturday
21 August 2010**
10.30am - 4.30pm

(Last admission to House and Workshops 4pm)

Enjoy the Victorian House and Workshop, with its nationally significant collection of locks and keys.

Take a tour in gas-lit rooms, soak up the atmosphere and hear the clatter of belt driven machinery in the workshop.



Company of: The Black Country Living Museum.
Registered Charity: 504481

For further details call
0121 557 9643

The Locksmith's House
54 New Road,
Willenhall, Walsall,
WV13 2DA

Bookings c/o The Black Country Living Museum
Tipton Road, Dudley DY1 4SQ

tel: **0121 520 8054**
web: www.bclm.co.uk

you can help!

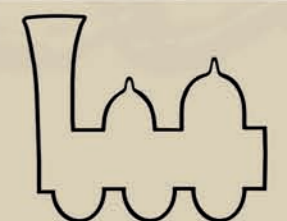
if you see a Willenhall made lock in some far-flung holiday destination this year, send your story (with a photograph where possible) to:
jennyw@bclm.co.uk

the story judged to be the most unusual will win a complimentary family ticket to the **Black Country Living Museum.**

Hodson Lock found in Peru!

Last year, Dave Church, former deputy manager, was on holiday in Peru. He was surprised to discover some familiarly -shaped bar padlocks for sale on a market stall in Pisac. He was even more surprised when he spotted that one of them - a heavy 5-6 inch padlock - carried the steam loco mark of R Hodson & Son.

Dave didn't manage to get a photo of the lock but this is the Hodson symbol ▶



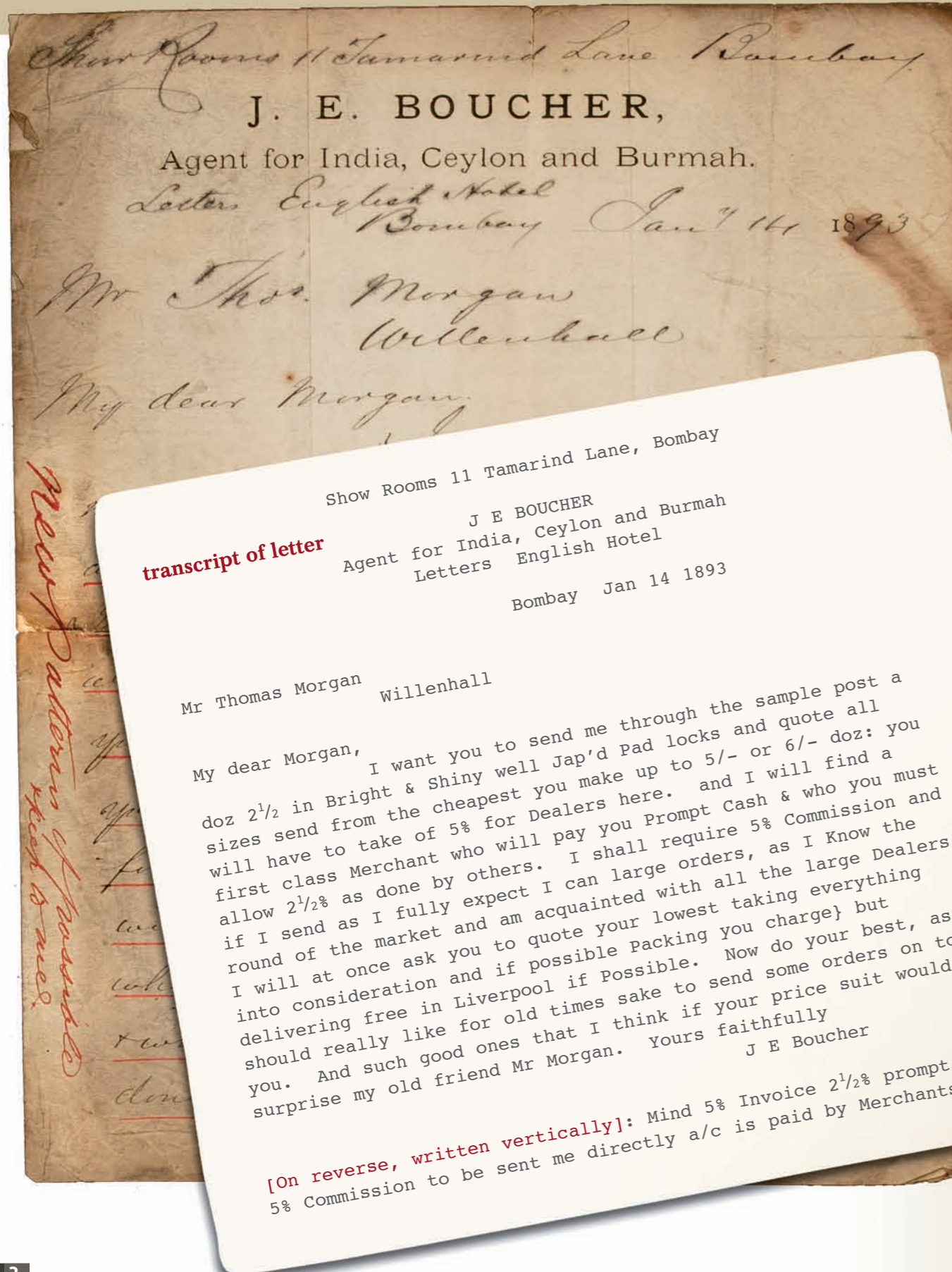
The Locksmith's House
54 New Road
Willenhall, Walsall
WV13 2DA

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Please Note: At all other times bookings must be made using the number opposite if you wish visit the Locksmith's House.

Export Opportunity: Padlocks to Bombay, 1893

A letter dated 1893 discovered inside a ledger from the firm of Thomas Morgan & Son.



transcript of letter

Show Rooms 11 Tamarind Lane, Bombay
J E BOUCHER
Agent for India, Ceylon and Burmah
Letters English Hotel
Bombay Jan 14 1893

Mr Thomas Morgan Willenhall

My dear Morgan, I want you to send me through the sample post a doz 2 1/2 in Bright & Shiny well Jap'd Pad locks and quote all sizes send from the cheapest you make up to 5/- or 6/- doz: you will have to take of 5% for Dealers here. and I will find a first class Merchant who will pay you Prompt Cash & who you must allow 2 1/2% as done by others. I shall require 5% Commission and if I send as I fully expect I can large orders, as I know the round of the market and am acquainted with all the large Dealers, I will at once ask you to quote your lowest taking everything into consideration and if possible Packing you charge} but delivering free in Liverpool if Possible. Now do your best, as I should really like for old times sake to send some orders on to you. And such good ones that I think if your price suit would surprise my old friend Mr Morgan. Yours faithfully
J E Boucher

[On reverse, written vertically]: Mind 5% Invoice 2 1/2% prompt Cash
5% Commission to be sent me directly a/c is paid by Merchants.

Marc Fitch Fund Awards Grant



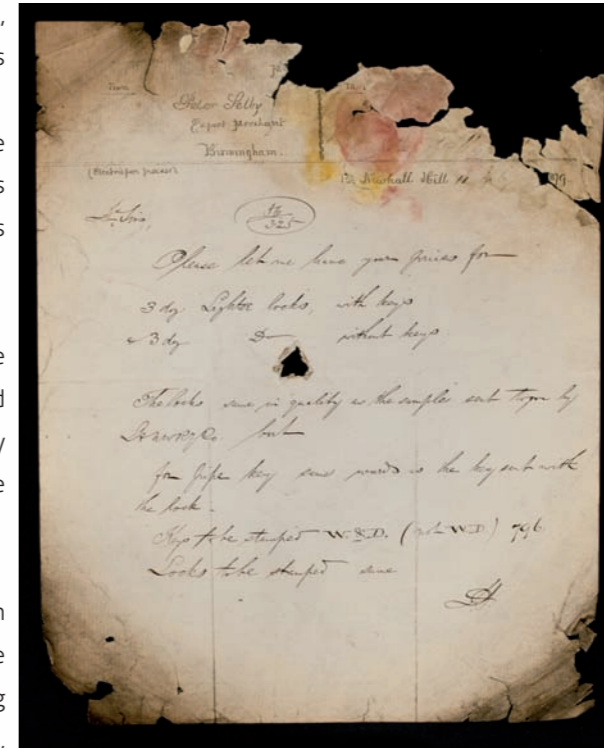
for Conservation of Hodson Papers

At the end of April 2010, we were delighted to hear that we had been awarded £3,000 by the Marc Fitch Fund towards the conservation of the Hodson Archive.

The fragile state of the 19th century loose business papers of R Hodson & Son has been a cause for concern for some years. Originally filed on spikes, they gathered dust and deposits from the various processes of the lock-making activities of the Hodson family over decades while being stored in workshops or attics.

All this requires very careful handling by staff and volunteers. Many of the papers have lost substantial chunks of text already, there are many tears, and also areas which have been affected by damp and mould where the paper can easily flake off.

The first volunteers to work on the papers in the 1980s removed them from the spikes very carefully while wearing white cotton gloves.



It would be impossible to make these delicate papers available to researchers without conservation measures being taken. We are therefore very grateful to the Marc Fund Fund for providing us with the opportunity to commence work on this task. While not being able to treat all the papers, we will be able to concentrate on a sample from the earlier years

Now we are removing them from the plastic bags where they were stored in year groups and cleaning them with special sponges, cataloguing them on the museum database and placing them in acid-free paper cut into four flap enclosures (like a fully opened-out envelope)

The picture clearly shows the fragile nature of the loose business papers. The hole in the centre is where they were stored on spikes.

What the Hodson Business Papers Tell Us

The 19th century loose business papers from the Hodson Archive are a fantastic resource for research. For instance, we can identify the merchants in Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Walsall who traded in the South American market and who sold on R Hodson bar padlocks to Peru, Chile, Brazil and other exotic destinations. We can also follow the trade the family carried out in supplying lighter locks to the lightermen and barge owners along the Thames in London. The quantities and prices involved would form a massive research project in themselves which could be part of a larger research project looking into the economic history of the lock trade in the 19th and 20th centuries



Design for a barrel lock found sketched upon one of the papers