

IRONMONGERY

John Scott RIBA

Introduction and design history

The purpose of this technical note is to help those involved in works to the houses of Bedford Park to understand the features that give them their special character and architectural value. The overall conservation intent of these guidance notes is to assist sensitive analysis and decision, not to prescribe a single solution. There is often a case for more than one design detail to be appropriate in each circumstance.

At first sight, the design and construction of Bedford Park houses appears to follow a consistent pattern. This is misleading, and the subtleties of each situation need to be appreciated if the architectural integrity of the houses is not to be eroded by incorrect repair, replacement or new construction using inappropriate materials and details. There were original differences even between houses of the same type. That said, the design and construction of the houses in the Bedford Park conservation area as a whole consists of a restricted range of materials, forms and details against which the appropriateness of repair, replacement or new construction can be evaluated.

A very substantial body of relevant knowledge has been amassed in Bedford Park and it is the intent of this work to make it accessible to all those involved in the maintenance and modernisation of the individual houses. In this way intelligent and sympathetic interventions can be made that preserve and enhance rather than damage our shared heritage.

Some appreciation of how the houses were designed and built over a period of several years will be helpful in understanding the variation in detail. With few exceptions, the architects involved in the development of Bedford Park were not engaged to supervise the construction of the houses. The architects – Norman Shaw *et al* – determined overall design intentions and nature of details but as there were a number of builders involved over a period of years, the implementation of designs, and (to a large extent) the detailed constructional decisions were left in the hands of the building contractors. Consequently, when replacing lost features or constructing new ones, care must be taken to research details from an appropriate example.

The following notes will give some pointers to the main issues to be considered, the most commonly successful techniques, appropriate detailing and sourcing of materials.

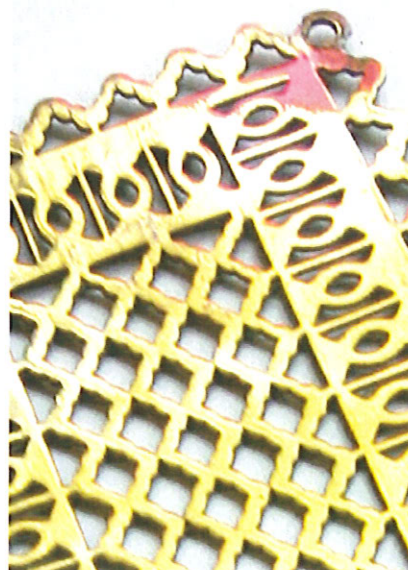
In buildings, ironmongery refers to all of the metal fittings to the building and this note is particularly concerned with what is referred to as “door and window furniture” – the fasteners and fittings to joinery components.

In the houses of Bedford Park there is little purpose-made ironmongery and whilst the proprietary items sourced by the developers and builders may have differed to some extent from house to house (as was the case with joinery and other detail) there is enough surviving evidence to show that there was

a dominant pattern in door and window furniture, which was used in a consistent manner throughout Bedford Park. Reassuringly, close matches to virtually all of these items are commercially available, and can be used with modern locks and other fittings.

In the course of alteration, restoration and modernisation much of the original ironmongery has been lost in many houses, and there are few if any houses remaining with a complete set of original door and window furniture.

However, a wide observation of that which survives (in many houses only partial survival) shows the following pattern as typical (numbers in brackets refer to illustrations). As with the internal joinery, a hierarchy of detail is seen between the areas of greater and lesser prestige and formality.



Detail of door furniture (figure 5)

Windows

Top floor and servants areas, casements (1): Plain iron or brass fastener. Iron casement stay, sometimes with knob end.

Ground and first floor casements (2): Curly iron fastener. Heavier iron stay with knob or curled end.

Ground and first floor sashes: Small plain brass sash fastener with round knob.

French windows (3): Hinged and articulated brass hook bolt, mounted about half way up the door, not on the middle rail. While this is an elegant fitting, it is wholly inadequate for modern security.



1. Plain casement fastener

2. Iron casement stay with curled end

3. French window fastener

Doors

Ground floor reception rooms (4,5 and7): Horizontal mortice lock. Brass knobs, often with a spiral reed decoration (variants exist with either rose fixing or spindle fixing). Plain brass covered escutcheon. Decorative pierced brass finger plates above and below the knob.

Ground floor rear servants' rooms (6): Steel cased rimlock. Plain spun brass 'bun' knobs. Plain escutcheon on outside. In the case of doors opening from reception areas to servants areas, the ironmongery would be of differing types on the two sides of the door.

First floor bedrooms (6): Horizontal mortice lock. Plain spun brass bun knobs, plain brass covered escutcheons.

Top floor bedrooms: Steel cased rimlock, sometimes with slide bolt rather than lock. Plain spun brass bun knobs, sometimes smaller than elsewhere. Plain escutcheon.

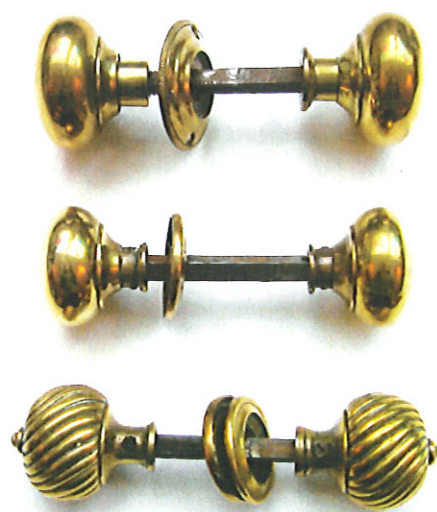
Cupboards: Examples survive of small cupboard knobs that match the spiral reeded door knobs to reception rooms. Other cupboards typically fitted with small spun brass knobs and either cabinet locks or simple turn catches.



4: Original Ground floor door furniture



5: Door furniture to reception rooms



6: Typical original door knobs

Ironmongery finishes

The original brass fittings would not have been lacquered. Virtually all of the brassware commercially available now is lacquered, but can be obtained unlacquered to order. Whilst the maintenance of unlacquered fittings is onerous if they are to be kept shiny, their appearance is undoubtedly better if that trouble is taken. Iron fittings would normally have been painted with the door or window.

Replacements

Fittings that are a close match to the originals can be sourced as follows (other sources may well exist, this does not aspire to being an exhaustive list):

Plain 'attic' casement fastener:
The Bath Knob Shop (TBKS) ref BI412

Plain iron casement stay: TBKS ref BI424-427
with curled end removed

Curly iron casement fastener: TBKS ref BI428 and almost all traditional ironmongery suppliers (note some are better than others, hammered finishes should be avoided).

Knobbed iron casement stay: No perfect match but TBKS ref BI424-427 is close.

Brass sash fastener: A&H ref 4337.
Many other suppliers similar.

French window hook bolts: Not available.

Spiral reeded knobs: Drummonds
(new reproduction range).

Escutcheons: Drummonds (reproduction or old)

Plain brass spun knobs, 2.25in diam: New from most traditional ironmongery suppliers. (Note that matching sets will be available for mortice and rim locks.) Old – Drummonds and other architectural antique dealers.

Finger plates: Not available but Drummonds and others can make replacements to order.

Rim locks: Many types available but none match the original case type. Old ones can be overhauled, resprung etc by competent locksmith.

Mortice locks: Many available. Care should be taken to match the original backset (the distance from the edge of the door to the spindle).

Suppliers

Some items are available from any good architectural ironmonger. The sources below are for the more specialised items.

Drummonds

The Kirkpatrick Buildings, and
25 London Road, 78 Royal Hospital Road,
Hindhead, Chelsea,
Surrey GU26 6AB London SW3 4HN

Tel 01428 609444

TBKS

The Bath Knob Shop, and
2 Ashmans Yard, A+H Brass
Locksbrook Road, 201-203 Edgware Road,
Bath BA1 3DZ London W2 1ES

Tel 01225 462090

Tel 020 7402 1854

Salvage and re-use of old fittings

John Scott, a local architect, has a collection of salvaged ironmongery and can provide individual items and occasionally complete sets. If you are seeking examples of original fittings for reuse, he may well be able to help.

Many house owners wish to change ironmongery to match throughout the house, room or floor by floor, and subsequently dispose of the old fittings. In some cases the fittings will be of no architectural interest, but in some cases isolated survivors of the original door or window furniture will be among the redundant items. *If you are disposing of any of the spiral knobs, finger plates or casement fittings described above please contact John Scott: 020 8995 4275.*

Caveat: *This note, and the set of technical notes that follow, draw on the knowledge amassed about Bedford Park houses by local expert practitioners and members of the Bedford Park Society, as well as accepted good conservation practice in building construction. They have been discussed and agreed with the Conservation Officers of the boroughs of Hounslow and Ealing. Whilst every care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the contents of these technical notes, no responsibility or liability for any loss occasioned to any person acting or refraining from action in reliance upon any statement in the technical notes will be accepted by the Bedford Park Society, any of its officers or members, or any contributors to the technical notes.*



7: Detail of original door knobs