

## AN INTRODUCTION TO SERIAL NUMBERS ON 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY ENGLISH, IRISH, AND SCOTTISH FIREARMS.

### 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY ENGLISH, IRISH, AND SCOTTISH GUNMAKERS WHO ROUTINELY SERIAL-NUMBERED THEIR CIVILIAN FIREARMS.

Listed chronologically, by year in which their serial numbers began.

With notes about whether pairs are assigned one number or consecutive numbers (if known). One number per pair: "One". Consecutive numbers for pairs: "Two".

HENRY NOCK: Earliest dated number 658, 1787/1788 by details of the label in the case. Earliest known number 319, probably 1785 or 1786. Guns and rifles numbered, not pistols.

Eric Griffin, WILLIAM PALMER MASTER ENGRAVER 1735-1812; second edition self-published 1999. Page 18. (Documents numbers for the years 1791-1794.) Plus other discussions.

ROBERT McCORMICK, BELFAST AND DUBLIN: 1787. One. Duelling pistols and guns have different number series. Irish Arms Industry History Blog of Dave Stroud. Each duelling pistol with serial number and year (1787-1796).

JOHN MANTON AND JOSEPH MANTON: each 1789. One.

W. Keith Neal and D.H.L. Back, THE MANTONS: GUNMAKERS. Herbert Jenkins Ltd., London, 1967, pages 65 (John) and 223 (Joseph).

SAMUEL STAUDENMAYER: 1803. One. Started at 1000. [Restarted at 1 after his death in 1825, the business then run by his executors.]

Sean Brown, "Samuel Staudenmayer Gun Maker Cockspur Street, London."  
Arms Collecting, Volume 40, No. 3 (August 2002), pages 90-93.

Peter Scott-Edeson, "Dating the Firearms of Henry Staudenmayer—An Update".  
Arms Collecting Newsletter No. 72, February 2003, pages 4-6.

I am collecting Staudenmayer serial numbers.

THE MORTIMER FAMILY: Numbers are listed starting in 1806 for H.W. Mortimer & Son, but numbers are not listed for H.W. One.

H. Lee Munson, THE MORTIMER GUNMAKERS 1753-1923. Andrew Mowbray Publishers, Lincoln, RI, 1992, pages 288-289.

SAMUEL NOCK: 1806. ONE.

I am collecting Samuel Nock serial numbers.

THE WILKINSON FAMILY: 1807.

Nigel Brown, BRITISH GUNMAKERS Volume 1—London. Quiller, UK, 2004, page 132. Also, some shop record and serial number information is available from the surviving company.

FORSYTH & COMPANY: 1808. Two.

D.H.L. Back, GREAT BRITISH GUNMAKERS FORSYTH & Co. PATENT GUNMAKERS 1806-1852. Historical Firearms, Norwich, UK, 1995, page 31.

WILLIAM SMITH, SAMUEL & CHARLES SMITH: 1809. One. Started at 1000.

Matthew Schneiderman, “William, Samuel, and Charles Smith 19<sup>TH</sup> Century London Gunmakers”. Arms Heritage Magazine, Volume 10 #2 (April 2020), pages 17-25.

I am collecting Smith family serial numbers.

JAMES PURDEY: 1816. Two.

L. Patrick Unsworth, THE EARLY PURDEYS. Christie’s, London, 1996, page 29. Also, some shop record and serial number information is available from the surviving company

ELISHA COLLIER: 1818. One. Started at 1.

Ben Nicholson, CLOCKWORK BASILISK THE EARLY REVOLVERS OF ELISHA COLLIER & ARTEMAS WHEELER. Headstamp Publishing, Nashville, TN, 2023. Two volumes, the second containing a Catalogue Raisonnee.

WILLIAM & JOHN RIGBY: 1821. Two.

D.H.L. Back, GREAT IRISH GUNMAKERS MESSRS. RIGBY 1760-1869. Historical Firearms, Norwich, UK, 1992, page 31.

CHARLES MOORE: 1821. Pairs of pistols: one number. Pairs of guns: consecutive numbers. I am collecting Charles Moore serial numbers.

Matthew Schneiderman, “Charles Moore London Gunmaker”. Arms Heritage Magazine, Volume 5, #3 (June 2015), pages 12-19.

URBANUS SARTORIS/ANTHONY FARINDON BIVEN: 1822-1826.

Matthew Schneiderman, "Urbanus Sartoris: One or Two?". *Journal of the Arms and Armour Society (JAAS)* Volume XXIV, No. 3, March 2023, pages 147-162.

I am collecting Biven/Sartoris serial numbers.

CHARLES LANCASTER: 1826.

Nigel Brown, *BRITISH GUNMAKERS Volume 1*—London. Quiller, UK, 2004, pages 120-121.

WESTLEY RICHARDS: 1830-1832. One. [Garth Vincent website 2020, cased pair of percussion officer's pistols, both numbered 331 on barrels and trigger guards. Ditto a pair #716, [www.aaawt.com](http://www.aaawt.com), "more pistols 3".

Nigel Brown, *BRITISH GUNMAKERS Volume 1*—London. Quiller, UK, 2004, page 127.

Also, some shop record and serial number information is available from the surviving company.

JOSEPH EGG, CHARLES & HENRY EGG. One or two.

I am collecting Joseph Egg, Tatham & Egg, Charles & Henry Egg, and Henry Tatham serial numbers.

GUNMAKERS WHO SOMETIMES USED SERIAL NUMBERS, BUT IT'S UNCLEAR TO WHAT EXTENT. I'VE NOT FOUND LITERATURE DISCUSSING THEIR SERIAL NUMBERING PRACTICE:

EZEKIEL BAKER

DURS EGG One. (I've seen two pairs using one serial number per pair.)

See addendum below.

WILLIAM KAVANAGH

WILLIAM PARKER; PARKER, FIELD AND SONS.

JOHN PROSSER

ISAAC RIVIERE

HENRY TATHAM One. (Cased pair of pistols #1566, circa 1816.)

TRULOCK & SON

TRULOCK & HARRISS

JOHN DICKSON & SON, EDINBURGH. Founded 1820. Serial number 2716, a 12 guage centerfire double gun converted from pinfire, is from 1866. The owner (LY) reports that 102 firearms were made by the firm that year, 72 of which were centerfire or pinfire shotguns. The firm's letter recounts the importance of that production year, as competitors made increasing numbers of centerfire guns.

WILLIAM POWELL & SON. Serial numbers began in 1844, when "William Powell" became "William Powell & Son". The earliest number known is in the 800s. SH has copies of the shop records.

MY COMMENTS ON THE SERIAL NUMBERING PRACTICE OF DURS EGG, May 2022.

1. I not aware of any published information on Durs Egg serial numbers. I have not tracked them, and haven't really paid much attention to them (until now!). I have a note that I've seen two pairs of serial-numbered duelling pistols. This was to make the point that when he numbered pairs, one number was used (so I didn't record the details or the numbers).
2. Generally speaking, when a firearm is presented in an auction catalogue or a dealer list, or when described by a collector, or shown in a book, the statement "no serial number" or the failure to mention a serial number means that either there is no serial number or the responsible person failed to find it/look for it. e.g. I have a pair of Durs Egg duellers and one single, and I haven't removed the barrels.
3. I have not seen a marking quite like Terry's gun's D.EGG 986 PATENT. There are two Durs Egg patents, from 1803 and 1812. I have the one from 1803, which includes many small and unrelated claims. "Patent" on a firearm can mean there's a patent by the maker relevant to the arm; or a patent by another inventor relevant to the arm and licensed or stolen by the maker; or no patent by the maker, and he's lying to stir up buyer interest; or other reasons I can't think of. In this case, it would probably take the original flintlock configuration to figure out what the word refers to on this gun. 986 may be a patent-tracking number, but if so I'm surprised not to have seen others.



4. The Met Bedford catalogue does not mention any serial numbers for the 9 Durs Egg firearms included.

I have never seen a serial number on a small D. Egg pistol.

5. I have now looked through the Neal sale catalogues, which include many firearms by Durs Egg. Here's a summary. All these are flintlock. Dating is from the catalogues. The basis of the dating is not discussed; to me it seems not too helpful, and in the case of #68 confusing.

Two Ferguson system rifles NSN. Small pistols NSN.

Guns/rifles 6 with numbers, 5 without.

Duelling and related pistols 1 with number, 6 without.

#68 cased rifle "circa 1810" Sale 2000 lot 109.

#326 rifle "early 19th century" Sale 2000 lot 66.

#449 double gun "c. 1800" Sale 1995 lot 17.

#613 cased single gun "c.1800" Sale 1995 lot 149.

#672 cased double gun "c. 1800" Sale 2001 lot 110.

#805 double gun "circa 1815" Sale 2000 lot 75.

#823 cased pair of duelling pistols "1816-1820" Sale 1995 lot 325.

Also: #986 Terry's converted O/U double gun "D. EGG 986 PATENT".

#212 Flintlock gun, "patent steel with safety vent" "1800-1805". Del Mar 12/6/23 lot 405.

My initial conclusion: sometimes Durs Egg numbered his guns, rifles, and duelling/target pistols, and sometimes he didn't!

Matthew Schneiderman September 2025  
schneiderman615@gmail.com

