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No key – all you need to get in is your smartphone

Allowing landlords to share secure, scheduled access to their rental property, Smarke (pronounced ‘Smar-key’) is launching in the UK following successful trials.

The system, developed and manufactured in this country, promises to completely change the way we give people access to our property, whether it be friends or rental clients.

With Smarke, a mobile phone grants immediate access to a property, and a Smarke lock is the same size as a standard Euro lock.

The Smarke keyless entry app gives the home/hotel/AirBnB owner full control – they decide when guests are able to check in and out.

Owners grant access via the Smarke app to a guest’s smartphone by specifying the dates and times of their visit. The guest can then grant access to other members of their party.

The Smarke app uses Bluetooth to unlock and lock the door so there’s no need to rely on a potentially unstable internet connection.

The device is battery operated, and when the battery is running low (it lasts up to six months), alerts go out via the app.

Smarke’s home access range consists of three products: a smart lock, an intercom solution and a keypad. All these products are protected via military grade encryption, so only those who are authorised can use it.

Smarke is a secure, keyless access system ideal for people renting out their properties on platforms like AirBnB. Bassam Beidas, one of the founders and an ex-professional sportsman, spoke to **Adrian Peel**.



Someone operating the new Smarke smart lock with their mobile phone

Bassam Beidas, originally from Lebanon, founded the smart lock company with fellow countrymen Hady Abdelnour and Charly Bousaid. He is their director of

marketing and told the *Cambridge Independent*: “Basically we’ve created a set of connective hardware products, which are self-installable. Our main product is a Smarke lock, which you put on the inside of your door – it replaces your existing lock.

“Once it’s fitted, you install our mobile app and you’re able to lock and unlock the door using your phone. But, more importantly, if you get guests, family members or visitors to download our app, you can then send them access ahead of schedule.

“This is extremely useful for people who rent out their places on AirBnB, for example, or who have service people or cleaners coming to their house.”

The idea for Smarke came when Bassam lost his key while staying at an AirBnB in London a few years ago.

“At the same time, Hady and Charly were really interested in tech products,” he recalled, “so they were tinkering with ideas as well and, when I heard what they were doing, that coincided with my experience and I joined them.”

A former professional tennis player, upon his retirement Bassam worked in marketing for a

mobile app. Hady, who has a background in finance, and Charly, a planning and process engineer, both worked for an investments company in Lebanon. The three entrepreneurs are now based in London and have been living there for about six months.

Bassam said: “We believe a lot of different businesses have a big need for a product like this. I think it’s one of those daily things that everyone can relate to.

“Personally, whenever I leave a restaurant or a shop, I have to pat my pockets down four or five times to make sure I have everything there – and I think it’s a problem that many people face today.”

The company is seeking to promote its invention in the UK and beyond.

Wesley Ridgeway, general manager at the Hotel du Vin in Cambridge, gave his opinion as to whether the idea might take off here in Cambridge.

“I know as a company we have looked into the process of using smart locks,” he said, “but with that I think we lose the personal touch – we take you up to the bedroom, we show you around, we show you how everything works.”

A family friendly business that goes the extra mile

Camilla Carter, sales & marketing director at Cambridge Classics, told **Adrian Peel** more about the services she and her close-knit team offer.

Cambridge Classics is a traditional, family-run business in the heart of Cambridge which fits houses with energy-efficient windows and doors.

“We specialise in period properties – Edwardian, Georgian, Victorian – but we do some projects on newer builds as well,” said sales and marketing director Camilla Carter.

“We provide wooden double-glazed windows, so sash windows, casement windows, Norfolk sliders – and doors.

“But we’re not your average door company. We’ve been based in Cambridge for 16 years and we go the extra mile.

“We do all the interior and exterior decorating, we use National Heritage colours, our



“**It’s important to us to keep Cambridge beautiful**”

joiner’s based just outside of Cambridge. Everything is kept nice and local, and it’s important to us to keep Cambridge beautiful.”

Elaborating on the history of the firm, which covers an area within a 20-mile radius of Cambridge, Camilla said: “My dad founded the business, and in April he handed it over to my husband – who’s the managing director – and me.

“My dad still works for the company, my sister works for the company, my brother-in-law works for the company, my brother-in-law’s brother works for the company... we’re quite a close-knit team.”

Camilla and co work with Ridgeons, a building materials supplier in Cambridge, and try whenever possible to source locally.

“We use Ridgeons, we’re great fans of Mackays,” she noted. “We like to use the companies that are on our doorstep, right down to our website provider who’s based in Burwell.”

Cambridge Classics has worked on hundreds of properties in Cambridge. Asked to comment on specific standout projects, Camilla replied: “Recent jobs would be many of the terraced houses off Mill Road – we work on lots of those.

“We’re working on a really exciting project for the International Whaling Commission, who are based in Impington. They’ve got this beautiful big building called The Red House and we’re replacing 29 windows in that. It’ll look stunning.”



“It may work for other types of businesses that haven’t got that personal touch; if it’s someone who doesn’t want to be hassled and just wants to go to their room and be by themselves.

“From an AirBnB point of view, you don’t have to meet the guests – they can go straight in.”

Smarke is designed to meet the needs of property managers, hosts and guests on platforms such as AirBnB and HomeAway, though would be ideal for anyone who regularly misplaces the keys to their home!

■ For more information, visit smarke.com or [igg.me/at/smarke](https://www.instagram.com/at/smarke).

Advertisement feature



Christopher Walke, Woodfines Solicitors

The Norman roots of our leasehold culture

Our concept of leasehold property dates back to the Norman invasion of 1066.

The new king, William the Conqueror, granted hereditary estates to his most loyal knights in exchange for promises of fealty and military service. Those knights, in turn, doled out parcels of land to tenants for fixed periods of time in exchange for produce or rent.

Over time, landlords began selling longer leases, typically for 99 or 125 years to maximise their income, without relinquishing ownership of the land, while tenants developed rights to extend the duration of their leases upon the payment of a premium.

The right to extend the lease of a flat is contained in the Leasehold Reform Housing & Urban Development Act 1993.

To qualify, a tenant must have owned a long lease – i.e. a lease granted with a term in excess of 21 years – for at least the last two years.

The new lease will be for the remaining unexpired term of the lease plus 90 years and at a peppercorn rent, but otherwise on the same terms as the existing lease (save for any necessary modernisation).

The right is exercised by the tenant serving an initial notice which will normally include a figure for the premium payable to the landlord. Once the notice is served, the tenant also becomes responsible for the landlord’s statutory costs. To ascertain the value of the premium, the tenant will normally need to have a



valuation carried out in respect of the property. In return, the landlord will serve a counter-notice, either admitting or denying the claim.

The process of preparing and serving the initial notice and dealing with the landlord’s counter-notice can be complicated and there are strict time limits involved.

Assistance from lawyers and surveyors is generally required, particularly when it comes to negotiating the premium and drafting the new form of the lease.

If your lease has less than 90 years left to run, you should seriously consider applying for a lease extension.

Not only will the value of the lease continue to diminish over time, but once the remaining term drops below 85 years, the property will become less attractive to buyers and mortgage lenders.

Once it drops below 80, the landlord will also become entitled to a significantly higher premium. If you would like to speak to someone about extending your lease, please contact Christopher Walke of Woodfines solicitors today.

■ Contact 01223 411421 or visit woodfines.co.uk



Front row Camilla Carter, Laura Yady-Wong and Stuart Carter, with some of the team. Left, some of Cambridge Classics; work Main picture: Keith Heppell

One of Camilla’s favourite aspects of the job is meeting customers in their homes. “Even if it’s only five or 10 minutes in their house, I like capturing five or 10 minutes of their

life – everyone has a story and that’s really lovely,” she said.

“We’re not hard-sell, so we’ll go and quote but we’ll chat. Then we’ll leave a brochure and it’s up to the

customers to decide in their own time – that’s really important.”

Asked about future expansion, Camilla replied: “We’d like to learn more about the restoration of sash windows, we’d like to branch out to other areas – perhaps Norfolk. So we do have plans to grow, but obviously everything takes time.”

Cambridge Classics is sponsoring this summer’s Roar festival and will be exhibiting at the inaugural Cambridge Home + Garden Show, sponsored by the *Cambridge Independent*, which will take place at the Guildhall on September 9.

“We’re really looking forward to that,” said Camilla. “I discovered them via Twitter and was really interested in getting involved because Cambridge has never had anything like this before.

“I met up with Jennifer [Chong], the organiser, in Hot Numbers and we came on board.”

■ cambridgeclassics.co.uk
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camhomeshow.com



The Battle of Hastings as depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry