

Real standards

We are on a mission to transform security and corrosion resistance with hardware that does what it says on the box, says Brisant Secure CEO Nick Dutton

Suppose it was inevitable with our backgrounds, that when I joined Steve Stewart to grow Brisant Secure, the hardware house he'd set up, we'd focus on door hardware. And we'd be obsessed with solving the two biggest problems in door hardware.



Nick Dutton

We were on a mission to transform the embarrassingly poor levels of security installers were forced to accept, and hardware coatings so bad they sometimes didn't make it out of the warehouse without pitting, peeling, or discolouring! Fabricators and installers were painfully aware of both problems, but the hardware industry just didn't want to see these two elephants in the room. If they acknowledged them, they'd have to put their hands in their pockets and solve the problems.

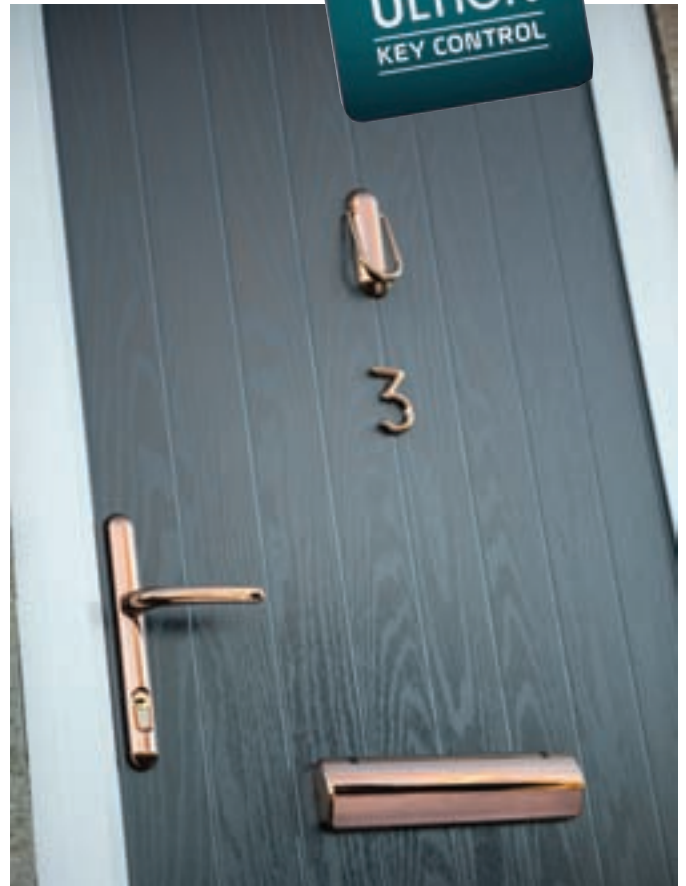
Brisant burst on to the locksmiths' market in 2013 and quickly won over the demanding locksmiths' market with 'locks for locksmiths'. Then, in 2015 we launched Ultion for door fabricators and installers. We knew security was a big homeowner concern and the industry's products were not having much effect. But, security sells doors, and extreme security sells more, because it's what installers want to sell, and homeowners want to buy. Ultion was a new generation of lock, designed to keep burglars out in the real world, not just pass unrealistic security tests in test labs.

Approved by every 'body', Ultion lock has all possible accreditations including the BSI Kitemark, TS007 3 star, Secured by Design and Sold Secure Diamond. In Sold Secure Diamond tests Ultion resisted all attempts to break in and tester teams gave up after an hour. This is the robust security homeowners expect. We're so confident in our security that Ultion is backed up with a free 10-year £1,000 guarantee against burglary by lock snapping. "The Ultion guarantee is a great selling tool as it gives our customers reassurance, although we've not had any call backs," says Kevin Barrett, owner of Barrett's Windows.

"Brisant offers the most secure products on the market which is why we use them as we want to offer our customers the best," says Martin Harris, joint director of Qualitere Windows.

Corrosion standards were also very poor with hardware peeled, pitted, discoloured, and corroded. In fact, they were totally useless in marine environments, and polluted atmospheres attacked coatings in or near urban and industrial areas too.

Currently, the standard accelerated weathering test for hardware is 240 hours (10 days) in salt spray. The 'best'



test is just 480 hours (20 days), but that's nothing if you live by the coast. So, we left Lock Lock and Sweet door furniture in for over 8,760 hours (1 year). Protected by multiple special coatings and smart designs they came out as good as new. So, the Brisant Secure 10-year guarantee is not a paper-promise guarantee that we hide behind. If, on the remote chance, something does go wrong, we will sort it out directly with the homeowner, so the installer does not suffer the consequences in cost or reputation. □

www.brisantsecure.com



As Mila records its 40th year in the UK several members of its staff are celebrating milestone anniversaries with the company



Mila's original premises opened in Daventry 1980

Technical director Strafford Cooke has been with Mila for 30 years, marketing director Sarah Gyde 20 and Jennie James from Mila's sales office team, has completed her first decade with the business.

Managing director Richard Gyde, himself a 39-year veteran, says that the reason why people stay at Mila is not because they are comfortable or complacent but because it's an exciting and dynamic business where people have the opportunity to build exciting and rewarding careers.

"We know that our team are our biggest asset, so we've created a culture where hard work and loyalty are

rewarded. Right across the business, our team have accumulated vast amounts of knowledge and experience and of course that's ultimately what makes Mila a great company to do business with."

Strafford Cooke, who spends much of his time providing technical support and advice to customers, as well as sitting on various industry committees representing the views and interests of the hardware sector, says: "The Coronavirus pandemic has shone a light on corporate cultures like nothing before, and the way that everyone at Mila has responded and been supported throughout has confirmed to me exactly why I'm still here after 30 years. Mila cares about its staff and its customers and that really matters to me. I'm proud to have spent so much of my career here and I'm already excited about what we will all do next."

Sarah Gyde says: "Mila strives to be the best hardware business in the UK, and I think our marketing has always reflected that. Over the past 20 years, I've worked hard to help build a brand with real integrity which promotes quality and service above all else. Certainly, we differentiate ourselves via our products but, more importantly, we differentiate ourselves via our team and I'm proud to be a part of it." □

www.mila.co.uk

Architectural ironmongers are being encouraged to demonstrate their competence for specifying door hardware by gaining a diploma in architectural ironmongery in preparation for industry changes.

The Guild of Architectural Ironmongers' (GAI) education programme is offering a *Certificate in Architectural Hardware* as a self-led, online course and examination in two stages. It is particularly useful for those working in related warehouse and trade counter roles, scheduling and estimating, customer service, technical support, sales and administration.

Those who complete Stage 1 will be fully competent in making informed decisions when working with particular products and materials, and will have a good understanding of best practices and industry standards. Stage 2 shows learners how to apply product and industry knowledge. It also gives a more in-depth understanding of the industry and its components such as fire door hardware, access control systems and intermediate scheduling. □

Enrolments will close on 18 December 2020. To find out more about the GAI Education programme visit:

www.bit.ly/GAI-Education-Hub



GAI Education programme in Dubia

www.gai.org.uk

Can't compare?

Gary Gleeson, marketing manager at hardware specialist VBH, explains that by offering extras such as a free security guarantee, its customers are scoring against their competition

Many of *The Fabricator's* readers will know that VBH have been supplying the UK window and door market for a very long time. In fact it was in 1975 when we first started to bring hardware over from Cologne, before opening our UK operation in 1982.

Since that time we have evolved from being a distributor of other people's hardware into being a manufacturer in our own right, following the creation of our own greenteQ brand over a decade ago.

We have now become more than just a supplier, and our major customers now see us as a partner.

It's our duty to support our partners which we do in a number of ways.

We make ordering and stock management easier by offering simple services such as VBH24, our online shop, which has seen a huge uplift in users in 2020. It has shown that online purchasing is becoming as popular in the workplace as it is at home.

The ultimate goal of all our customers/partners is to sell more windows and doors at the best possible margins. To help with that we offer a comprehensive hardware guarantee. This is available to approved VBH customers, or their installer customers in the case of trade suppliers (the Q-secure Network). We call this the Q-secure guarantee which they can offer to the consumer to help clinch a sale.

Q-secure promises to pay the homeowner direct if a break in occurs during the 10 year duration of the guarantee. We believe that if the members of the Q-secure Network offer something that their competition can't, they have an edge. They can then focus the prospect's mind on quality and security rather than on price.

During lockdown our thoughts turned to how we could help our customers negotiate what was sure to be a rocky road when they returned to work. So we invested further in Q-secure to make it even more attractive to everyone in the supply chain from fabricator to consumer.

Q-secure differs from other hardware guarantees in that it is a multi-brand guarantee. It's not just a greenteQ guarantee; we also include hardware brands from some of our supplier-partners. This means fabricators are free to choose their own preferred hardware package from the list of approved hardware that we offer. This results in each approved manufacturer tailoring its individual window and door products to its own satisfaction. It ensures that everything on a window, door or patio door is covered so there can be no quibbles if a valid claim is made. In theory a casement window could include hardware from greenteQ, Yale and Roto, for example.

Installers know that the products that they are selling are secure and they have an extra sales tool to use. Consumers get the reassurance that the suppliers of their new windows and doors are so confident in the security of

them that they guarantee paying out thousands of pounds if something goes wrong.

The first step towards refreshing Q-secure was to add more products to the approved products list, including the ArTech tilt and turn system from our Italian partner AGB,

and our own greenteQ ClearLIFT lift/slide door system. The general public's appetite for big ticket home improvement items such as patio doors shows no sign of abating, which is why Q-secure Network members have access to guaranteed bi-fold doors, inline sliders and now lift/slides. At VBH we refer to these as our lifestyle product range.

We are investing heavily to generate more leads and enquiries through a number of channels for all in the Q-secure Network. Part of this investment has been spent on giving the www.qsecure.co.uk website a major face lift.

The headline upgrade for many is that we have increased the potential maximum pay out from £3,250 with Q-secure original to £8,000 with the new Q-secure Premium.

We are all doing things differently now. Consumers are researching before making even the smallest purchase, let alone making a major investment like replacing windows and doors. They demand more bang for their buck. It's important to know, though, that this doesn't mean they want everything cheaper. Do we, when we have our 'general public' hats on? No, what we all want is extra features or services for our money. Like a free 10 year security guarantee for instance.

At VBH we urge fabricators and installers to sell on security, quality, features and guarantees, and move away from the price argument as much as possible. The companies that are thriving are those focusing on aspirational products such as lifestyle doors, heritage flush windows and colours, and offering extras such as Q-secure. □



Gary Gleeson