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# Terragong Unlocking the Past

*By Simon Milner.*

*Five (of a total of six) internal doors off the central hallway at Terragong feature wonderful door furniture that was no longer in full working order. This is the story of the restoration.*



Terragong's single-storey weatherboard 'wing' was the original farmhouse on the property, dating from 1840, to which the two-storey main house was added in 1858. Today the weatherboard section contains three guestrooms, their en-suites as well as the butler's pantry. The Marks siblings from whom we purchased the property explained that the weatherboard section had been razed in a kitchen fire in 1879 and that, although no written evidence confirming the date of the rebuild existed (that they were aware of), family oral history led them to believe that the rebuild of the weatherboard structure took place in 1880.

Our refurbishment of this part of the house included removing, repairing and rehangng all of the doors. Five (of a total of six) internal doors off the central hallway - three guest rooms, butlers' pantry and passage door from the entrance foyer - feature wonderful door furniture that was no longer in full working order.

The locks are made of cast iron and brass, the accompanying strike plates of cast iron with brass detailing. As the doors were taken down for repair, the hardware was tagged according to which doorway it had been removed. Following the advice of our restoration carpenter Red, liberal amounts of paint stripper were applied to remove the multiple layers of paint. Once stripped of the majority of paint, a buffing with extra-fine steel wool exposed the original surface of the cases, whilst preserving a rich patina.

Removing the paint revealed brass medallions bearing the name of the manufacturer as well as a model number. Jumping online (thank you Google), we learned that they were manufactured by H&T Vaughan in Willenhall, England, circa 1875-1880. The company was established in 1856 and during the latter part of the century Australia and New Zealand were their primary export markets (more information can be found at <http://lockcollectors.eu>). Based on this information, a date of 1880 for the rebuild seemed likely.

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Further online research (and quite a few phone calls later) led us to K9 Locksmiths in Sydney, who had previous experience working with locks from this period and were able to repair the lock mechanisms and create new keys. The locks and their strike plates were packed into individual boxes and delivered to K9's workshop. Key blanks were sourced from what we understand to be the sole remaining skeleton key blank manufacturer in Australia (in Tasmania) and each was hand-cut and filed, not an inexpensive exercise, with each key blank costing approximately \$100.

We ordered three keys per lock, as well as two master skeleton keys able to open all locks. A few weeks later the locks and strike plates were returned to us in working order, each with three keys.

We gave their exteriors a final clean and polish, a blacking and a protective wax coating and passed them to Red our carpenter, who reinstated them on their respective doors.

[www.terragong.com](http://www.terragong.com)





**Pre-refurbishment**



**After third application of paint stripper**



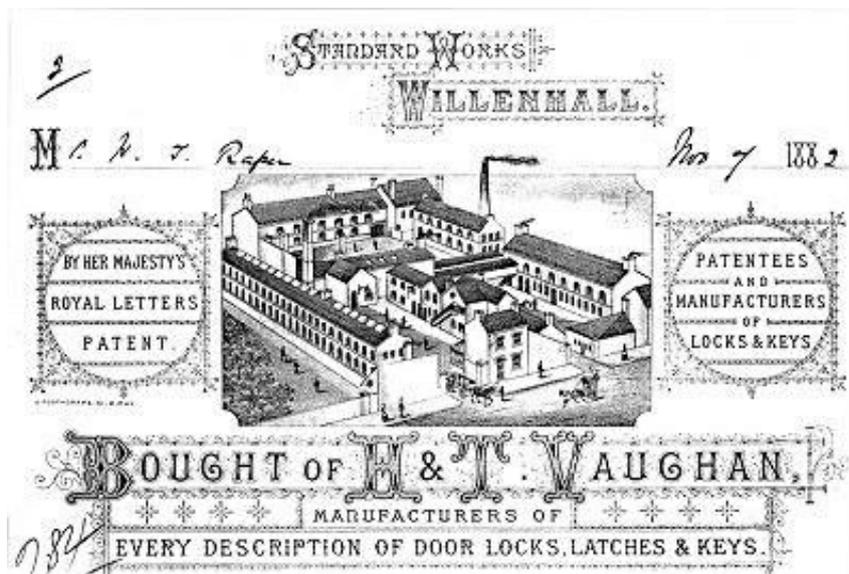
**All paint removed**



Manufacturer's lozenge detail



Manufacturer's advertisements





**Finished result**



**New keys**