

STAINING OF BLUE BRICKWORK (peacocking & picture framing)

Blue bricks often exhibit an oily coloured type of stain, which may be referred to as 'Peacocking'. Stemming from the colours found in the feathers of the male Peacock and being similar to the swirling colours of oil on water, it has always been a normal feature of blue clay brickwork due to the iridescent effect of the brick's colour and is caused by light diffraction through a very thin surface layer of colloidal silica.

Peacocking in the true sense of the word is rare and other staining issues may be mistakenly referred to as this.

Staining is usually the result of:

a) Saturation of brickwork prior to the mortar curing. This gives a 'picture frame' effect, with the dark staining more apparent around the edges of the brick. Higher degrees of saturation may release free lime present in the mortar resulting in lime leeching from the joints.



Picture Framing



Staining

b) The direction of water run-off from cementitious areas, i.e. floor slabs.

c) A fine deposit of cement or lime transmitted to fine crazing lines by the moisture in the mortar at the time of laying.

All are superficial and are not detrimental to the performance of the brick. Changing weather conditions can highlight some of the effects as can the initial drying out of brickwork.



Peacocking

To minimise the effects, good site practice should be adhered to following the recommendations in BS 5628: Part 3 'Code of Practice for Use of Masonry and BS 8000:Part 3.

Keep stacks of bricks and newly laid brickwork as dry as possible.

Clean the brickwork down at the end of the job with a proprietary brick cleaner containing a brick detergent.

For further information and advice regarding this topic please contact Ibstock's Design & Technical Helpline on 0844 800 4576 or email technical@ibstock.co.uk