

STAINING OF BLUE BRICKWORK (PEACOCKING)

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.

The stain is very noticeable on blue bricks due to the iridescent effect of the brick's colour, which is caused by light diffraction through a very thin surface layer of colloidal silica.

The staining is usually the result of:

- a) By 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.
- b) Bricks coming into contact with copious amounts of water before being 'built in'. The manufacturing process uses a layer of silica sand to separate the bricks during the firing process. Without this the bricks would fuse together in the kiln. The residue of Silica on the bricks can turn blotchy when saturated.
- c) Direction water run-off from cementitious areas, i.e. floor slabs.
- d) A fine deposit of cement or lime transmitted to fine crazing lines by the moisture in the mortar at the time of laying.



All of the above 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.

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, keeping stacks of bricks and newly laid brickwork as dry as possible and cleaning 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 Brick Limited on 0870 903 4017.