

Bowral Bricks

Bowral Blue construction and cleaning recommendations

These recommendations are to provide a best practice guide to Bowral Blue dry-pressed bricks during the construction and cleaning processes, which, when followed will reduce common problems.

BRICK CONSTRUCTION

Good workmanship and correct storage of bricks during construction will ensure that a number of potential stains are avoided.

Storage

Ensure bricks are stored appropriately (either on pallets or on plastic sheeting), to prevent bricks absorbing ground salts and excessive water, which may cause issues when laid.

Bricklaying

Care should be taken to help keep the wall free of mortar dags and smears. During laying these should be cut off with a trowel. On completion, mortar smears on the work face should be removed by dry brushing. The cleaner the bricklayer leaves the wall the easier the cleaning task will be. Do not sponge the joints of the brickwork.

Moisture

Cover the brickwork at the end of each day, especially when rain is expected. Additionally, ensure all bricks stored onsite are not exposed to rain. Failure to prevent moisture from entering the brickwork during construction may result in efflorescence and other leaching issues.

Copings, Sills, Weathering

Stormwater should be shed so as to clear the masonry immediately below. Copings and sills should project at least 10 mm beyond the wall face at the underside of the sill or coping. Where downpipes have not been installed water from the guttering should be diverted away from the brickwork.

BRICK CLEANING TECHNIQUES

The use of the correct cleaning methods will prevent further problems arising.

Clean As You Go

Cleaning as you go is the best method for ensuring good brickwork. Mortar smears are best cleaned when fresh.

Safety Precautions

The manufacturer's instructions and safety precautions should always be followed when using acids and other proprietary cleaning chemicals.

Wet the Wall

The brickwork must be thoroughly wetted before any acid solution is applied and kept wet ahead of the acid application. Work a small area at a time and where possible avoid cleaning in direct sunlight.

The wall should be kept wet to prevent the acid from being absorbed by the brickwork which can cause staining.

Acid Concentration

Hydrochloric acid is used for cleaning mortar smear by dissolving the cement component of the mortar. The recommended maximum strength for Bowral Blue bricks is 1 part acid to 20 parts water.

Hydrochloric acid should not be used for any other cleaning of brickwork and may result in further staining if used inappropriately.

Acid Application

Apply the acid solution and leave to stand on the wall to allow the chemical action to occur, this could take up to 3 to 6 minutes.

Hose Off

It is extremely important to thoroughly hose off the wall as the work proceeds. If the acid is left on the wall too long it can be absorbed into the brickwork and may cause staining.

Subsequent Acid Application

After a day or two the brickwork should be treated with Noskum at half strength. Wet the wall thoroughly prior to Noskum, leave for 5 minutes then rinse well with water.

High Pressure Cleaning

The following should be adhered to:

- Low pressure - max 7000kPa (approx 1000psi)
- Use a wide fan spray nozzle (> 15°)
- Distance of 500mm from the wall
- Use 'runs' of approximately 1m in width
- Keep the gun moving constantly
- Turbo head attachments should not be used

Warning: If the mortar joints or the bricks are being damaged, either the pressure is too high or the water jet is too close to the wall.

NOTE: These recommendations follow the Think Brick Australia Brick Cleaning Manual (<http://www.thinkbrick.com.au>)

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