



# TIPS & WATCHPOINTS

When buying and laying  
Natural Stone.

1. When buying Natural Stone tiles certain rules have to be followed. Stone being a natural product, has different variations in colour, density and hardness values. It is important to ascertain which will best suit your project, ie: light or heavy traffic, etc. It is advisable to obtain several small samples of your chosen stone and then ask for a full size piece, thus giving you a better idea of the overall shading and colour. Be aware that the colour of the stone will darken slightly when sealed and polished.
2. When your stone has been delivered, open the packing cases to check the colour and variation of shading, the thickness of stone and for damage. A few damaged stones are acceptable as they can be incorporated into the cutting. You may also notice the stone looks a little darker than you remember; this is due to the stone being packed wet in the quarry.

#### TIPS ON INSTALLATION.

1. Screeds. A sand & cement, level screed is an excellent fixing substrate. Newly laid screeds are required to cure for one week per 25mm depth. The alternative is to use Ditra Matting to uncouple the substrate and enables you to begin stone installation as soon as the screed is "touch-firm". Ditra Matting will add 5mm to the finished floor level. Although not cheap, (approx £10 per sq. mtr.) the matting will give you peace of mind, knowing that if your screed develops cracks, it will not transfer to the finished floor, thus giving the installation definite longevity.

The screed should preferably, be laid by an expert and therefore will be flat and fairly level. A Levelling Compound can be applied to correct any imperfections. Then the floor needs to be sealed using a priming agent.

2. Fixing on Floorboards. The main problem occurs when floorboards are liable to moisture retention and movement. This could result in disaster for your stone floor. To avoid this you must observe the following:-

- a. Use 18mm exterior grade Plywood, thoroughly sealed with a priming agent.
- b. Stagger the ply joints at 0.5 - 1m between the sheets.
- c. Countersink screws at 300mm centres.
- d. Around the edges screw at 150mm centres.
- e. If desired, you can apply Ditra Matting over the ply, which will act as a uncoupling, anti-cracking membrane.

3. Existing Ceramic/Stone/Lino Tiles. Loose tiles should be removed; the floor degreased and cleaned. Vinyl tiles must be sealed. Ceramic tiles must be slurried. Unglazed and Stone tiles, when clean and dry, can be fixed on without sealing.

4. Tips on Electrical Under-floor Heating. Heating wires come in a matting roll and adds 6mm to the finished floor level. Try to purchase wiring that has tape attached, which is simply taped down to the substrate. Although laying the matting is a comparatively easy process, it is best left to someone with experience, for speed and to ensure the wires do not get damaged. once the matting is in place, the wires are covered and

levelled, the best method being with a Levelling Compound. Once fixed, the cold cable and thermostat wire need to be run to the designated electrical spur. Laying the stone floor can then begin, taking extreme care not to damage the wiring. Flexible adhesive and grout must be used.

5. Insulation Boards. These boards come in different thicknesses, so choose according to your finished floor level. They are cut to shape and fixed level, using Flexible floor adhesive.

On no account must these boards be fixed using the "blob" method. The boards must be fixed to a serrated substrate and attain 100% adhesion. If this is not done, movement will occur and cause installation failure.

6. Adhesives & Grouts. All stone tiles must have a solid bed with no voids. Fast setting adhesives are best as they disperse moisture from the stone. Light coloured stones are fixed with white adhesive to prevent possible discolouration. Flexible adhesive is used on timber, existing tiles and under-floor heating. Slurry grouting is used and is available in a variety of colours - ask your installer to match. For under-floor heating use a flexible additive in the grout or ready mixed flexible grout. You will find that Limestone grout looks perfect with most stone.

#### ADDITIONAL TIPS

SETTING OUT. This is essential, otherwise the cuts and areas leading to units, doorways, etc. will look unsightly. The squaring is achieved by the 3-4-5 method. Only a professional fixer will give you a well set out, flat and level floor.

SEALING & POLISHING. A good tiler will always work "clean", so at this stage he will wash off

any residue, to ensure the floor is perfectly clean, if not it could cause visual imperfections. Sealers are then applied and generally need 24 hours to impregnate the floor. This acts as a stain stopper. Liquid wax polish is then applied - usually 2 or 3 coats. The finish can be buffed to improve the sheen.

EXTREME VARIATIONS in colour of stone. You may find several stones in your batch that are a little darker or lighter, these can be placed under units or in out of the way places. Shade variations in Natural Stone are inevitable and generally do add to the character and rustic charm of a stone floor.

SURFACE PROTECTION. One of the main enemies of a Natural Stone floor is grit which is walked in from outside. It is, therefore, advisable to have a mat outside and in, to eliminate this problem. Stains can be removed with specialist products, but the golden rule is to wipe off immediately, with warm water, anything which might stain, ie: curry, red wine, jam, etc.

#### SUMMARY

Natural Stone tiles provide strong, beautiful floors and when laid and maintained correctly will last a lifetime. Therefore, it is essential that your stone floors are installed by a very experienced, professional fitter, who is familiar with all fixing, sealing and polishing techniques. Ignoring this may lead to disappointment and financial loss.