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INTRODUCTION

The use of clay tiles to protect and decorate walls and floors is very old indeed. Evidence from the earliest settlements demonstrates the use of this material for basic insulation and decoration. However, medieval monasteries developed the art of tile making to a high degree. Their complex inlaid tile pavements inspired many later Victorian designers.

Monastic tile making came to an end with the dissolution of the monasteries. In most domestic interiors the use of tiles was unknown until the seventeenth century, when plain quarry tiles were used for floors — but only in the better houses; most dwellings still had earth floors.

Hand painted glazed tiles were imported from Holland in the eighteenth century and a few English tile works were setup to imitate this fashionable “Delft”ware. In 1756, a patent was granted for a transfer printing process that increased production of decorated

glazed tiles, but it was not until 1830, when the porcelain manufacturer Herbert Minton began to invest in tile production, that the astonishing growth of the nineteenth century industry began.

Victorian tile manufacturers found that the market for mass produced tiles was insatiable. Since they were cheap to obtain and easy to install, tiles offered the speculative builder the chance to incorporate cheerful, hygienic and fashionable decoration into all kinds of houses. New building regulations, requiring greater attention to hygiene, stimulated demand even further. By the mid 19th century, tile decoration of some kind was to be expected in even modest artisan dwellings.

The general enthusiasm for tiles became so great that in 1878 the "Pottery and Glass Trades Review" asked: "To what use can tiles not be put? Cornices and chair mouldings, door frames and windows are set with them; hearths outlined or made wholly from them, doors inlaid, and staircases decorated... summerhouses are gay with them, for the tile is always fresh and cool looking in its bright designs, while nothing is warmer for winter rooms than the dark earth coloured ones".

Today, most decorating materials are available in tile form. As well as the enormous ranges of ceramic tiles, there are mirrored, glass, cork, plastics, aluminium, stainless steel, vinyl, rubber and carpet. Although this book will cover the whole range of tiles in use, it is intended more for those who wish to undertake jobs using ceramic or other earth tiles in projects which require skill and patience.

Tiling techniques are the same for all materials except for the method of Cutting them and adhesives for fixing them. Tiles are easier to handle than sheet materials, and actually fixing them onto walls

and floors is simple. The one main problem is that the first tile determines the position of every other. This is where do-it-yourself tiling can be spoiled before it has even begun. The secret is to plan the entire job before fixing that first tile. This is called “setting out”.

The main area of the wall or floor is called the “field” and is always tiled first with whole, uncut tiles. This leaves the spaces around the edges, called the “border” to be tiled separately, each tile being cut to fit. A well done job has a well balanced appearance, as though the tiles fell into place quite naturally and without effort. However, this is the result of spending as much time setting out the job as in fixing the tiles.

Tiling, perhaps more so than any other forms of decorating or general home D.I.Y. requires attention to detail and a great deal of patience. Quite often it will require a significant amount of money too. Therefore, anyone brave enough to consider a project such as the tiling of a whole bathroom, kitchen or hallway needs a good basic grounding into the techniques required to carry out a successful tiling job. Certainly, if you intend to carry out a more elaborate job, such as a patio or swimming pool, then you will need to have undertaken a smaller, easier project first.

This book is set out logically, enabling you to progress step by step until the necessary skills have been acquired to carry out tiling work. The chapters are arranged as follows:

Chapter One gives an overview of the types of tiles in use. It is very important to understand the type and nature of different tiles. The end result of your endeavour will very much depend on the materials used.

Chapter Two deals with the essential tools needed for the job and also gives an outline of the types of material needed in the tiling process. However, specific manufacturers are not mentioned, other than those makers whose names are the same as a product.

Chapter Three describes, in more depth, the process of wall tiling and the types of tiles used. The processes of preparation of surfaces and setting out are discussed, along with the art of shaping and fixing tiles and the process of “grouting”.

Chapter Four deals with ceiling tiles and the process of fixing ceiling tiles, along with types of tile used.

Chapter Five deals with floor tiles. Floor tiles, along with wall tiles, are perhaps the most complicated processes and demand more attention to detail. In this chapter we look in more depth at the type of tile used and at the preparation of floors. We also look at setting out tiles and cutting and fixing. Finally we look at grouting of tiles.

Chapter Six puts forward a number of useful tips relating to previous chapters.

Chapter Seven looks at the care and restoration of Victorian tiles and covers the types of tile in use in that period. This is in recognition of the importance of restoration and conservation of homes and other buildings of this period.

There is a list of useful addresses which the reader can contact for further information concerning tiling.

Remember, tiling requires patience and attention to detail, and not a little money. The end result however, can be spectacular and a

source of deep satisfaction to the person who has achieved the finish. Whether it be a kitchen or bathroom, a hallway or external work, or even a tiny project, an immense amount of pleasure can be gained.

GOOD LUCK!