

TACS – Removal of Decorative Tile Panels

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TACS Conservation Information Sheet No. 7

Late Victorian tile schemes are almost always fixed to the substrate with a strong Portland cement mortar. Lime mortar indicates that the scheme is earlier. Portland cement is harder than the ceramic body of the tile. Both tile and mortar are unforgiving materials.

Consequently, a sacrificial area around the panel must be created.

A line around the panel should be cut using a diamond blade saw, cut width 2 mm. cutting back to the brickwork.

Remove any tile work and screed to a width of about 15cms around the panel.

All grout lines between tiles must be cut *right back to the brick work*. This separates one tile from another preventing any shock wave damage running across a number of tiles causing fractures. It must be ensured that *no mortar along these lines is left uncut*, as this will effectively join one tile to another.

Once the tiles are separated then each tile is carefully tapped away *between the brickwork and the mortar* using a fine wide blade chisel and hammer.

The mortar is later removed in a controlled way on a bench. One way to achieve this is to fix the tile securely in a 'workmate' or vice and to carefully grind the mortar away with a small stone grinding disc attached to an angle grinder.

There is no way of assessing the hardness and adhesive qualities of mortar until work on removing the panel has begun. Different tiles and different mortars have different tolerances.

The above notes are intended for guidance only and no responsibility can be accepted for the failure to remove tiles successfully.

This process should only be attempted by persons who are trained or experienced in the use of diamond cutting power tools.

It is always advisable, when remounting tile panels, to use a method which will not cause damage during any subsequent re-location of the panel in the future.