

Belfast Harbour Office Grade A Listed Building Circa 1850 Extended 1895.

Contract to restore the fine Victorian Mosaic floors in marble on the upper floors & the un-glazed dust-pressed mosaic tile lower floors.

Our Co also restored the sandstone staircase connecting the two mosaic floors.

The main area of the contract concerned the lower floors which had large areas of lifted or as they refer to it in NI "boosted" sections of mosaic flooring.

Previous attempts to fix this type of problem had taken another Co some month or more to secure only a small area, because we had dealt with this problem on a regular basis it was possible for our Co Heritage Tiling & Restoration Co to stabilise much larger areas and quickly which is a benefit to our client and our Co as we get a quick turn-around.

Without giving away trade secrets our method involved introducing a very fine liquid adhesive into the air-gap between the tesserae and the screed from which the mosaic had lifted due to shrinkage in the lime-based mortar screed.

Once the liquid adhesive had covered a certain area we then placed plywood sheets over that section (having taken a few tesserae out to allow for movement) and weighted those sheets down with sand bags.

Missing mosaic was replaced with a plentiful supply that had been stored in the cellars.

After the adhesive had set = 3-4 hours as it was a fast setting adhesive then we began cutting the replacement pieces and hammering them into place thus securing the mosaic into place and putting those sections back under tension.

The majority of this type of flooring including Victorian encaustic & geometric suffers from any change of use or introduction of efficient heating as lime-screed floors are very porous and continually take in and give out moisture.

When a new heating system is introduced this balance tends to be upset and the underlying screed dries out, this shrinking causes the tiles or mosaic above to tent or "boost" and gives rise to typical damage as pieces become loose .

Inevitably this leads to loss of tesserae or tile pieces which are for the most part dealt with in a very amateurish way! Usually by filling in with either neat cement which makes things worse or in the case of a beautiful Smalti glass mosaic of a Saint the missing pieces were filled in with car-body filler!!

After all the missing patches were secured we moved on to the upper gallery and fixed the few missing sections with new marble cut on site from larger marble tiles pieces. One person remarked that the yellow marble we were using was much brighter than the section being repaired; this is something that at the beginning of a restoration on marble mosaic often crops up.

Our stock answer is that as both the original marble tesserae and the "new" pieces are the same age they will look fine when the dirt of decades is removed from the mosaic floor.

Unless they know something about rock formation then often the person is surprised reference the same age tag. As both the old =original floor and the "new" cut repairs are millions of years old then apart from some shading etc the cleaning & polishing process will render the repairs near invisible.

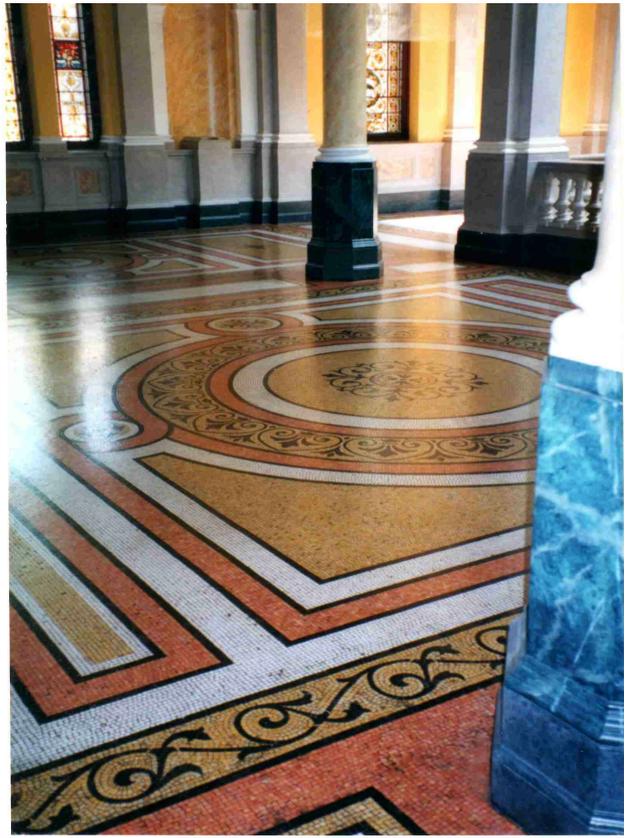
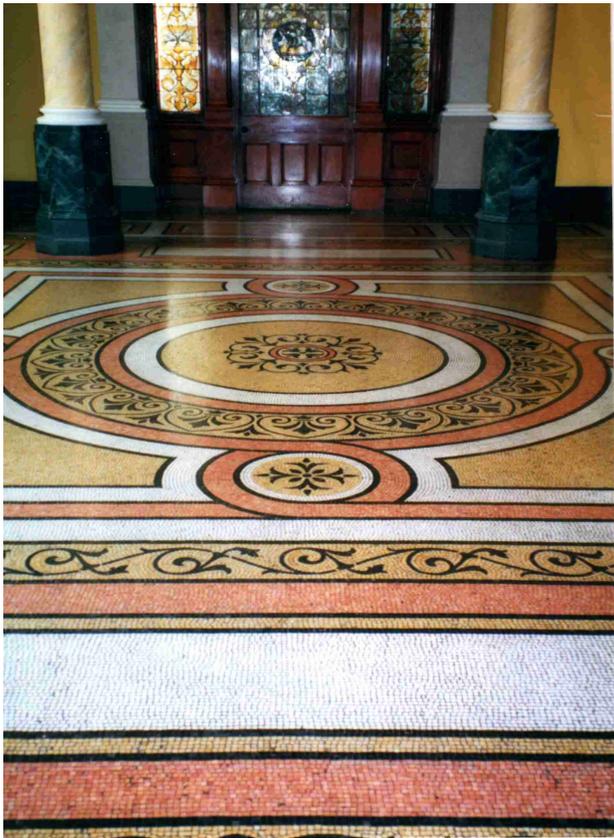
Two of our team concentrated on removing a thick yellow carpet glue from the fine stone staircase steps, this was done mechanically = sharp scrapers by hand and the application of layers of paint stripper.

When every section of floor & stair had been repaired and cleaned as much as possible by hand we moved on to using low rpm scrubbing machines and used them on all the different surfaces.

We also used a slight abrasive pad on the 3 sections = lower floor-upper floor & stairs to remove any in-grained dirt before we applied a water base sealer. The client was pleased with our efforts and provided a testimonial to that effect.

P3.

Pictures of the finished contract.



P4.



View from the stairs of restored Victorian mosaic tiled floor.

P5.

Reference for Belfast Harbour restoration contract.

Belfast Harbour Commissioners

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Gordon R. Irwin O.B.E. CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Our Ref: 205/RH/BB

Your Ref:

8 May 2001

To Whom Concerned

Dear Sirs

Harbour Office, Port of Belfast - Repairs and Cleaning of Mosaic Floors

During the spring of the year 2000 "Heritage Tiling and Restoration Company" carried out the following works to the Harbour Office building in Belfast. The Harbour Office is a listed building built in 1850 and extended in 1895.

- (a) Repairs to ceramic floor tiles on the ground floor, injecting adhesive to secure loose areas of tiles, cleaning and resealing.
- (b) Cleaning of sandstone steps to main staircase and sealing.
- (c) Cleaning and resealing of first floor marble mosaic flooring.

The value of the overall works was of the order of £30,000.

The work was carried out on time to the agreed quotation and to our satisfaction.

Yours faithfully

W Wilson
Technical Services Manager