

Help and advice



Alec Stacey on prefinished floors

Oil be loving you but will it be for ever?

OILED timber floors continue to be in demand with a big rise in the number of prefinished products now available. Unfortunately, when any type of prefinished flooring is installed there is a real risk of damage occurring to the surface.

The common 'damage' inflicted is in the form of adhesive residue on the surface of the flooring, which can be very difficult to remove depending on the adhesive used.

Another scenario is when as part of a refit or new build, the flooring is the first part of the project to be completed. As electricians, decorators and other trades follow the floor invariably suffers.

Prefinished floors that are damaged can be challenging to rectify, sometimes resulting in the whole floor requiring sanding back to bare wood before a new treatment is applied.

Such a situation arose recently

with a prefinished (with oil) floor installed into a 'new build' area of approximately 80sq m. Due to continuing works on-site the floor had become marked with paint residue, plaster and scratched in places. The client was obviously unhappy and insisted, very strongly, that the surface was restored.

The flooring contractor attempted to do this by applying a traditional floor oil to the surface. This product was designed for producing a finish on bare timber and, as such, would ordinarily penetrate the top layer of the timber producing the matt, enhanced appearance one associates with traditional oiled floors.

However in this scenario, because the surface had already been 'sealed' in effect by the factory applied UV cured oil, the contractor's oil was unable to soak into the timber. Instead it dried on the surface producing a

very different effect to the original finish.

The surface was glossy with widespread swirl marks produced by the buffing process. In some areas raised circles were apparent formed by the oil container having been placed on the floor and oil running down the sides.

Once this work had been completed the direct sunlight from large windows in either side of the building had dried the oil to a hard state, comparable to a satin sheen varnish.

Ordinarily, if excess oil has been allowed to dry on a recently oiled floor, it's a simple matter of applying an oil with a higher solvent content which then softens the surface and allows the surface to be buffed off.

However in this case the surface build was so thick and cured to such a hardness that this remedial treatment proved to be a painfully slow process. A

faster process was finally employed using a fine screen to sand the excess oil from the surface before a thin application of maintenance oil was applied and the excess completely removed.

A matt surface as close as possible to the original was finally produced.

When attempting to rectify any damage or imperfections to a new prefinished floor remember that the customer has noted the floor's original appearance.

Consequently, a highly critical eye will be cast over any remedial action and comparisons will be made. Unfortunately, if this process is unsuccessful a possible outcome is a brand new floor. Then the unpleasant business of 'who pays?' **CFJ**

Alec Stacey is technical manager at BonaKemi

Further information on
 T: 01908 399740



Dr Eric Brown on the case of the disappearing design

A whiter shade of pale is to dye for

LAST month we discussed differential wear of components resulting from one fibre being stronger and more abrasion resistant than another. This month I want to consider a similar phenomenon.

The pictures on the right show the effect. In the case of the green/black carpet, a white component has almost completely disappeared from the design. This carpet is an 80% wool, 20% nylon Axminster construction.

The reason for this is simple. In order to obtain a good white in a wool yarn it is often necessary to bleach the wool. This means that a white yarn will undergo an extra process compared with other colours in the design. Unless this extra processing is strictly controlled it may well affect the abrasion resistance of the yarn causing it to wear away preferentially.

The second most common colour to exhibit preferential wear is black. The usual explanation for this is that a black yarn may

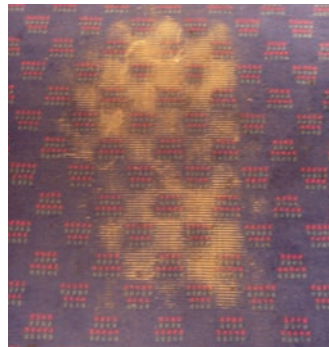


have been dyed several times.

This may occur as follows: Suppose a red yarn is required for a particular design. Suppose also that during the dyeing process the dye uptake is uneven. In such a circumstance the dyer will try to re-dye the yarn to obtain a level result.

However, if this fails, a completely new dyeing operation may be carried out in order to over-dye the faulty red. The most obvious colour to choose when over-dyeing a dark shade is black.

In such cases the black yarn may have been dyed three times compared with the other colours



in the construction. This too weakens the abrasion resistance and preferential wear of the black takes place.

In the case of the blue and red carpet it is the blue yarn that has also worn away preferentially. Obviously no bleaching has been involved and we must therefore look for some other cause.

There may have been a problem during dyeing. But there is also another possibility, and that is that the wool used in the blue yarn is of an inferior quality to that used in the red.

In any wool clip there are a number of fibres which are

somewhat hollow. These are said to be 'medullated' and may be described as 'kemps'. Not only do kemps take up less dye but they are also more brittle.

A particularly striking example of this was reported to us by a carpet cleaner who pointed out that every time he cleaned a particular carpet, the colours came up bright and rich but in no time at all, the appearance became much weaker but not as a result of soiling.

Instead, kempy fibres were breaking into fragments with different light reflectance characteristics causing the shade of the carpet to appear much weaker. The cleaning operation removed these brittle fibres and restored the colour to its original rich shade only for the cycle to begin all over again. **CFJ**

Eric Brown is the author of three manuals on the investigation of carpet complaints

Further information on
 T: 01943 462389