

THE TILE FIXER BRANCH AS A LINK BETWEEN THE MANUFACTURER AND THE CONSUMER

by Paul Uth (Germany)

- Course in tile - laying from 1941 to 1944.
- Course for Master Tile - layer and final examination in 1948.
- Employed as master tile layer in two large firms until 1956
- Created own company in 1956, with 20 employees.
- Working since 1965 with the German Association of Tile - layers.
- Since 1970, participates in several commissions, such as masters' examinations, tariffs and craft - education.
- Since 1978 President of the Association of tile - layers of Norhine - Westphalia.
- President of the German Association of Tile - layers since 1988.

Most german craftsmen do not think things over too much but like to go directly to the point. This time I would like to follow their example - therefore I shall start with the facts :

The tile fixer industry, with approximately 6,000 companies and more than 25,000 employes, is an efficient and productive industry. Tilecraft companies have from one to a hundred employees. Most of them are firms of one to three collaborators; this means 80 per cent of all the companies.

German tilers are qualified and titled professionals, and are capable of carrying out any type of work technically perfectly. A tiler's training begins after normal school and lasts three years, finishing with a final examination for apprentices.

Practical training is carried out on building sites and lasts 67 weeks. The duration of the training outside the centre is 37 weeks. The objective is to teach those techniques which are not learned on the building sites. In this way the apprentice's training in all knowledge and techniques is guaranteed. Apart from the training inside and outside the company there is also theoretical training which is carried out in a technical college and lasts 40 weeks. Theoretical knowledge is taught in line with the level of practical training, for example construction physics, chemistry, drawing, maths, the science of construction materials, colours, delineation, as well as basic commercial knowledge. Subjects such as philosophical and political science are also referred to.

The training syllabus and the requirements for the examinations follow the legal norms. In this way equal training for all tilers is guaranteed.

Summary:

Company	67 weeks
Outside the company	37 weeks
College	40 weeks
Holidays	12 weeks

This is the complete training. And who can set up a company? The condition for setting up a company is to have the title of skilled craftsman. The candidate has to have worked six years as a craftsman and passed an examination, the requirements for which are very high. After passing this examination the candidate can become a businessman. The following knowledge and skills are the condition for the qualification of craftsman:

- Practical work of high quality, taking into account all the physical conditions of construction the DIN norms and the formula of tilecraft;
- Elaboration of the work and tiling plans;
- Elaboration of chemically resistant tiles;
- Elaboration of integral and tiling installations;
- Elaboration of sound and heat absorbtion;
- Knowledge of the physics and chemistry of construction;
- Knowledge of heat, sound and damp protection;
- Knowledge of colours and delineation; (and these are only the most important)
- Commercial knowledge;
- Jurisprudence;
- Calculus and accounts;

All this knowledge guarantees that the craftsman will offer the client technically unsurpassable workmanship. The tiling company is legally responsible for the quality which corresponds to the prevailing norms, as well as the material with a legal guarantee of five years.

The DIN norms - these norms are legal - and the information sheets are the minimum requirements for unsurpassable and impeccable tilecraft.

The norms standardize general tilecraft.

The information sheets standardize special subjects, such as work with tiles and flagstones outside buildings; covering with tiles and flagstones with insulating cover; covering with tiles and flagstones in buildings with heated floors. They also contain instructions for the elaboration of blockage in combination with covering, amongst others.

These information sheets are developed in Germany by the Federation of Professional Tilers, in collaboration with other associations, for example the ceramic industry or other groups, such as the tiled floor and sanitary industry, etc.

These are the skills and knowledge of a trained tiler.

Permit me a few words on the history of our craftsmanship:

The German tiling craftsmanship has a long history. It was developed a hundred years ago from the ceramic oven craft. The tilers came from the plastering and pavement professions.

At the beginning of the century the first tilecraft companies appeared. However, it was not declared a profession until 1934. The economic success was achieved when the second world war ended, due to the necessity for reconstruction of houses and buildings, as well as the economic boom.

The Professional Federation of the German Tiler exists in Germany. This is a workers' organisation which 90% of the tiling companies have joined. The organisation has to take care of the professional and economic interests of the tiling companies, in the following areas:

- Business and legal advice.
- Collaboration in the elaboration of technical norms and regulations, such as information sheets and other information.
- Handling of technical matters and carrying out of investigation
- Handling of business affairs and information and of the legal aspects of works contracts.
- Salary negotiations with the workers.
- Elaboration of the plan of studies and the requirements of the training examination and the craftsman's examination.

- Collaboration in the examinations.
- Public work, related to publicity and press.

The professional federation has four commissions for the following sections:

- The technical section
- The training section
- The socio-political section
- The business section

It is represented by the president and four members of the council.

The aforementioned Professional Federation of the German Tiles represents the interests of the tiling industry, but also those of the ceramic industry, in accordance with what is specified below.

The tile which is manufactured by the ceramic factories is a half finished product. The tiler puts a coating onto this tile.

For this reason one depends on the other. We, the tilers, rely on good material. The industry relies on good tilers. So the coating of good tiles, functionally perfect and modern, is the best publicity for the tiling industry and for the product.

What does the tiling industry expect from the ceramic industry?

The tiles must correspond to the requirements of the norms. The quality of the different types of application, for example interior or exterior areas, abrasion and antiacid resistance must be guaranteed.

In the catalogues of the ceramic factories there are indications of the quality of the product, in accordance with the following standards:

Types of application
 Hydration
 Decorated or varnished borders
 Modular formats, measurements and weights
 Selection
 Accessories such as: supports, borders, plaques cut in a series of steps, well finished pieces.

Also considered important are:

Advice from external collaborators
 Publicity support through catalogues, posters, sample charts.
 Fast supplying also for small quantities (products of commission).
 Guarantee of quality, time of guarantee in accordance with the norms for tilers.
 Insurance for the guarantee.

As you can see, communication between the industry and the craftsmen must work perfectly, as we form a single unit for the market.

Which are the classical forms of application for tiles and flagstones in Germany?

Wall and floor coverings are used for:

Rooms, kitchens, bathrooms, halls and stairways.
 Premises in the food industry such as butcher's, baker's, industrial kitchens, as well as petrol stations, laundries and for the covering of frontages.
 Coverings and floors in hotels, laboratories and hospitals.
 Balcony and terrace, hall and room floors.
 In industry, toilet and shower installations, waiting rooms.
 Factories, etc.

The works contracting for tile covering is normally carried out by the authorities or by the architect. The basis of contracting is the V.O.B. norms, as well as the basic technical regulations.

We would now like to summarize:

The German tiling craft is an efficient service industry. Tiling companies are capable of carrying out all work with tiles, as well as the necessary preparations. The tiling industry does not only carry out normal tile covering but also covering with excellently designed and shaped flags.

The German tiling industry has at its disposal everything necessary to be able to carry out all the jobs in times of high conjunction.

Due to the unification of Germany and the high requirements which are a result of this, the expectations for the future are satisfactory. I think I can also say that the future will be very positive.