

The future of  
brick lies in past legacy

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**Bricks will always have an enduring quality to them, developing a deeper variance as they are influenced by environmental changes, and highly adaptable to suit contemporary needs of style and construction. As the great structures of the Roman Empire teach us, under the right conditions, brick can last over a millennium, making it one of the most sustainable products to be used as a long-term, low maintenance, façade material.**

Enduring, robust, elegant – the humble brick’s charm and practicality has never ceased. A dapple of exposed aggregate, a seam of colour change, a patchwork of prints. Despite the small size and shape of this unit of cooked earth, it forms a very large quantity of the world’s structures – modest and grand.

Over time, the decoration of brick broke away from its direct association with a structural need to a decorative feature in its own right by integrating flared bricks (bricks where the end faces were exposed to the highest temperatures of the kiln thus became blackened) into the bond pattern, such as diapering (diamond patterns), or cutting the bricks to make elaborate decorative structures.

The Tudor period was significant for this development of the brick, seen in such examples as the red brick gatehouses with their diapering patterns and twisting chimney stacks. It became popular again as part of Gothic Revival and Arts and Crafts movements during the Victorian Era. Between these periods was the Georgian period, which preferred the golden brick, as it was a closer relation aesthetically to the stone and plaster colours of the Italianate style they were replicating.

In direct relation to the fashions of England, the earlier work of New Zealand in brick relates to the Gothic revival style where decoration such as diapering patterns are used, and different coloured bricks help to express architectural features such as window openings and structural archways.

Construction methodology very quickly began to include cavity construction to help manage moisture movement of these structures, which changed the way we decorated. For example, traditional diapering used header bricks, which tied the first leaf of bricks to the next layer behind, whereas with cavity construction, all the bricks are laid only in stretcher bond only, so replications of diapering were adapted to suit.