Chartered Building Company

MFS, the Thin Joint Specialists, celebrate 5 years of blockwork!

Masonry Frame Systems a trading division of CBC Wye Manage Ltd, celebrate their 5th year of trading this May, as the leading Thin Joint Aircrete Blockwork specialist contractor.

MFS was set up in 2004 by Norman Hinckes and Robert Pointer specifically to provide a complete service for the design and construction of an airtight, weatherproof masonry shell of a home. Norman was convinced of the potential for the Masonry Frame from the outset and have built the business around offering this service throughout the south east of England.

"The key benefits," says Norman, "are speed and quality of build. We know that a weatherproof envelope for the average 2-3 bed semi-detached home can be built in ten days, with the facing brickwork or exterior cladding completely taken off the critical path. On top of this, the thermal insulation properties of aircrete are excellent, so the system can achieve the Code for Sustainable Homes and move towards zero carbon"

Units at Gwynne Gardens East Grinstead East Sussex for Hillreed Homes

Town Houses at Queensmere Road, Wimbledon

On one project in Queensmere Road Wimbledon SW19, the use of the Masonry Frame System cut 12 weeks off the original contract period of 30 weeks to build six family homes, which delighted the client to such an extent that a second phase of six units was undertaken using the same technique.

The system, at the forefront of innovation and using the latest construction techniques, offers all the benefits of traditional construction alongside the speed, efficiency and productivity of system build. The Masonry Frames' system also offers all the advantages of off - site manufacture, but with the convenience of the more traditional on site approach together with the robustness of solid masonry augmented by the ability to cater for bespoke individual design requirements, offering clients the best of both worlds for their money.

Completed Units at Gwynne Gardens

Modern Method of Construction (MMC)

When considering the range of modern methods of construction available, it is perhaps off-site construction methods that immediately spring to mind, with modular homes and panel solutions often hogging the limelight. MFS's masonry frame solution is proof that an on-site approach can fit the bill too, having acquired the status of a Modern Method of Construction (MMC) under the Housing Corporation's strict guidelines.

Similar time-savings have been achieved on the many other projects which Masonry Frame Systems has undertaken throughout the South East. The company have completed a project to build the shells of 14 units for Hillreed Homes in East Grinstead, East Sussex. Stephen Pilkington, Hillreeds building director, said that they choose the MFS system as they wanted to use a MMC that was closer to their traditional way of working.

The East Grinstead project was a success with all the units going

up in the 10 day turnaround period, giving Hillreed weatherproof shells before the onset of winter weather.

Time grabs the headlines

"The reduction in build time is what grabs the headlines" remarked Norman Hinckes "but it is the quality and consistency of build that never fails to impress me. We have taken what was otherwise an ad-hoc, untidy, mucky operation and turned it into a highly consistent engineered process, with startling results."

Seymour Road Wimbledon

Other benefits of the system include improved airtightness - a key requirement under the current Building Regulations and the Code together with reduced waste and defects. In addition, with Aircrete comes the benefit of Thermal Mass, with now high average temperatures being experienced in the UK because of climate change make summer overheating a potential problem. Thermal mass is now recognised as one means of reducing this effect. With masonry homes, the overall temperature is cooler since the Aircrete products absorb the heat in the daytime and release this stored heat at cooler times. Summer overheating is typically a problem for light framed systems.

Houses with higher mass also have a beneficial effect on the heating pattern in wintertime. By offering good thermal insulation, thermal inertia and air-tightness properties, aircrete reduces the extremes of the internal temperature within the building, keeping it at a more consistent, comfortable level, and reducing the highs and lows that would be seen in lighter structures with minimal thermal inertia or less thermally insulated heavier structures.

In addition, 'Thin-Joint' aircrete construction is less susceptible to the delays encountered due to the wet or cold weather during construction, and provides the robustness of masonry construction which the discerning homeowner prefers.

The Code for Sustainable Homes

Over the past five years MFS have carried out a wide range of projects, from the simple one off unit to large volume developments. The company has recently been awarded a 36-unit new housing scheme development in Westbourne, West Sussex, by developer Telegraph Construction Management.

H + H Celcons Aircrete products have been used throughout the build, namely, foundation blocks, standard blocks, Celcons floor elements and thin joint jumbo plus blocks and Celfix mortar.

The development is a 36 unit site, of mixed two and three bed units, some for sale, and eight homes for rent via Downland Housing Association. All units are being built to level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes.

On this project MFS in conjunction with H+H and Isover have trialled a new party wall construction, this has recently been tested given an impressive sound reduction of 57dB achieving maximum credits under the Code. For more information and a copy of the actual test results please contact MFS on 01233 813569.

Partners of H + H Celcon

As part of the development and growth of MFS a close relationship has been forged with H + H Celcon who manufacture the Aircrete blocks, and the two have formed a working partnership in developing Celcon Rå Build system.

Concludes Norman Hinckes: "I'm convinced that using an Aircrete Masonry Frame is the way ahead for housebuilding. With the current housing shortage we have to build quality, sustainable homes more quickly, more efficiently and to better standards of insulation. Quite simply, an Aircrete House is the answer and I've backed the idea with our business model."

What the future might hold

And what of the next five years....."well in spite of the current downturn in the economy, the future looks very bright for us" said Norman, "what with the current demands of the Code to achieve level 3 or more, obligatory now in the public sector, precluding most form of traditional construction; we are seeing a number of developers looking to switch their production from timber frame to masonry because they feel it is more saleable, and who am I to argue!

"We can confidently predict that with our current level of enquiry, we can look forward to our best year yet, and next year, who knows! What is for certain is that this recession won't last for ever and the 2016 time line for Code 6 zero carbon is getting closer and closer. We are working very closely with H+H for the solutions to level 5 and 6, and will be ready to implement these once the economy starts to recover."

For further information on MFS or any of the projects mentioned above or for a copy their latest newsletter please visit **www.masonryframesystems.co.uk** or contact MFS on **01233 813569** or e mail **us@masonryframesystems.co.uk**

Queensmere Road Wimbledon

Under construction - Phase 2 of Queensmere Road