

Bath Stone – a history

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Formation

During the Jurassic Period, what we now refer to as Bath was under water. Small grains of calcium carbonate rolling around on the sea bottom slowly began to pick up layers of lime, grow, and compact together. Over the next 150 million years or so, pressure from mounting layers of sediment caused those grains to form the limestone that the area is widely known for today.

Mines

Originally mined in the Combe Down and Bathampton Down Mines in Somerset, but more often than not, now mined around Corsham, Bath Stone has been a popular building material for many years.

Combe Down and Bathampton Down Mines date from the 17th and 18th century when stone was extracted by the "room and pillar" method, by which chambers were mined, leaving pillars of stone between them to support the roof. Following their closure, the mines were used for a variety of purposes, including a mushroom farm, and as an air-raid shelter during the World War II Baedeker raids on Bath¹.

Underground extraction of Bath Stone continues in the Corsham area but on a smaller scale than previously.

Use

Due to the conditions which formed it, Bath Stone can be cut (or 'squared up') in any direction without compromising its strength, unlike other rocks such as slate, which form distinct layers.

The distinctive honey-coloured Bath Stone was used to build the Georgian city. It's warm, honey colouring gives the World Heritage City of Bath, England, its distinctive appearance.

Here are two examples of wonderful works in Bath Stone:

Bath's Royal Crescent



The Royal Crescent is possibly Bath's most well-known landmark. The 30 Georgian houses that make up the Crescent were designed by the architect John Wood the Younger and built between 1767 and 1774.

Bath Abbey



Like other great abbeys and cathedrals, Bath Abbey has been rebuilt, extended, strengthened and renovated many times since it was originally built in the 7th century. Through to the 1660's when Sir George Gilbert Scott carried out a major restoration, Bath Stone was the primary building material, giving the cathedral its natural glow.

Limestone - Bath Stone mining is searched for in Landmark's Homecheck Mining & Subsidence and RiskView Residential reports.

The **Landmark Mining & Subsidence** report is a desktop report designed to highlight any potential mining and subsidence hazards at a property. The presence of a hazard could mean that a property is at risk of structural damage from subsidence or heave. The report covers a wide range of hazards from man-made and natural sources and, uniquely, provides information on real cases insurance claims from subsidence.

The **Landmark RiskView Residential** report is a comprehensive all-in-one environmental report combining the most accurate data with qualified expert advice and next steps recommendations. The report includes assessments for contaminated land, flood, energy & infrastructure, ground stability, planning, radon and an alert for coal mining. RiskView offers peace of mind and accessible data for homebuyers and complete due diligence from a single report for conveyancers.

Both of these Landmark reports are available from Wessex Searches.

References

1. "Combe Down Mines". Oxford Archeology.