



BATH STONE - A POSSIBLE GLOBAL HERITAGE STONE FROM ENGLAND

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The Middle Jurassic strata of England have several horizons of oolitic and bioclastic limestones that provide high quality dimension stone. One of the most important is found in and near the City of Bath. The Great Oolite Group (Upper Bathonian) contains the Combe Down and Bath Oolites, consisting of current bedded oolites and shelly oolites, that have been used extensively as freestones for construction nearby, for prestigious buildings through much of southern England and more widely. The stone has been used to some extent since Roman times when the city, then known as Aquae Sulis, was an important hot spa. The stone was used to a limited extent through medieval times but from the early 18th century onwards was exploited on a large scale through surface quarrying and underground mining. The City was extensively redeveloped in the 18th to early 19th century, mostly using Bath Stone, when the spas made it a fashionable resort. Buildings from that period include architectural “gems” such as the Royal Crescent and Pulteney Bridge, as well as the renovated Roman Baths. Many buildings were designed by some of the foremost British architects of the time. The consistent use of this stone gives the City an architectural integrity throughout. These features led to the designation of the City as a World Heritage Site. It is a requirement in current City planning policy documents that Bath Stone should be used for new building to preserve the appearance of the City. More widely the stone was used in major houses (e.g. Buckingham Palace and Apsley House in London; King’s Pavilion in Brighton); civic buildings (e.g. Bristol Guildhall; Dartmouth Naval College in Devon); churches and cathedrals (e.g. Truro Cathedral in Cornwall); and engineered structures (e.g. the large Dundas Aqueduct on the Kennet and Avon Canal). More widely, Bath Stone has been used in Union Station in Washington DC; Toronto Bible College and the Town Hall at Cape Town, South Africa. Extraction declined in the late 20th century but several quarries and underground mines remain operational providing stone for the local market, repair and maintenance of historic buildings and for special international projects. Reserves permitted for extraction are substantial and resources are fairly extensive so the stone will be accessible in the long term. Taking such points into account, it is suggested that Bath Stone should be recognised as a Global Heritage Stone Resource.