

Scottish Stone Liaison Group

NEWSLETTER

Indigenous Materials Project Team

Issue No. 6 Autumn 2003

Scottish slate

Foudland

Slate has not been quarried on the Hill of Foudland, high above the A96 main Aberdeen / Inverness trunk road, for at least 100 years and, over the years, all the quarry faces have become weathered and old tips covered with heather.

However, walking the hill, it is still possible to see the old tracks and during this exercise, a specific quarry was identified for further examination. In June a wider track was established and preliminary digs undertaken and on the 15th September a more extensive exercise was carried out.

The earth and rock was cleared to expose the face and then another hole, of some five metres to the floor of the old quarry, was opened and material secured from that level. In addition, with the use of a breaker extension on the large tracked vehicle, rock was secured from another two levels.

These samples were then taken to the yard of Fyfe Glenrock where they were rendered into

Khartoum

The SSLG Chief Executive met with the Ballachulish Community Council on the 18th August and has been advised subsequently that the Council will enable further, limited exploration in the Khartoum Quarry.

The Councillors present at the above meeting were advised of the Report of the University of Paisley which contained an analysis of the slate block that was extracted in 2002.

In essence, the Report indicated that the slate was of a very good quality with a life expectancy exceeding a standard slate of 200% but the samples available did not split very well. The funders of the extraction exercise, Historic Scotland, Scottish Enterprise - Lochaber and the Highland Council, all received copies of the Report and it is now available on the SSLG web pages – www.sslg.co.uk.

Again this will form part of the report that will be submitted at the conclusion of these two extraction and testing exercises.

block and subsequently split by hand. Within the limitations of the skill of the splitters and the size of the actual slate block secured, sufficient was produced to enable an analysis of the material.

These samples will now be subjected to the same testing regime as those secured from the Khartoum Quarry, Ballachulish and a report on these two exercises completed in due course.

Far be it from us to suggest that the sun again shone on the righteous but, when standing on this hill some 1000 feet above sea level and on a good day, it was not difficult to imagine the conditions that prevailed some 100 years ago when this slate extraction exercise sustained entire families working through the summer months.

One cannot but fail to be impressed at the hardship they must endured, but what they achieved and the material they moved - all without the aid of modern equipment - is something that can only be admired.



*Foudland test slates
September 2003*

Is there anybody out there?

"*National Planning Policy Guidelines*" provide statements of Government policy on nationally important land use and other planning matters and the SSLG has written to every Scottish local authority (4th August '03) enquiring of any actions undertaken to address paragraph 20 within NPPG 18. The following is an extract:-

"Traditional building materials and methods of construction are generally robust and can be widely promoted on the basis that historic buildings normally have a life span well in excess of modern buildings. For this, and in order to ensure that works involving the maintenance and repair of historic buildings and streetscapes can be carried out in a sympathetic manner, appropriate sources of traditional building materials should be identified."

In particular, the phrase "*appropriate sources of traditional building materials should be identified*", was highlighted as the SSLG is considering the possibility of developing something that could be considered an "appropriate" building material resource map of Scotland. With such detailed information it would be possible to ensure that the most appropriate material was located and used

All local authorities have been asked to respond but, to date **only SIX** have done so and, in two of these cases the information is sketchy to say the least. Such a comment does not apply to Fife, East Lothian or Highlands. Another letter, pursuing this issue, was mailed in October.

NPPG 18 underlines the importance and value of the built heritage, its contribution to the "*prosperity and vitality of historic areas*", the "*quality of life of the local community*" and calls for a "*better understanding of the overall role, needs and perceived threats to the built environment*".

The concern is that the needs of the Government in respect to this issue could be frustrated by the lack of understanding and action at local government level.

The SSLG is determined to pursue this issue and will report again in due course.

most appropriate material was located and used to enhance and maintain our built heritage in the most precise manner.

Carmyllie flagstone

Recap– The City of Edinburgh is planning to undertake an extensive pavement renewal programme for the New Town area and is currently testing four paving stones. Caithness paving and three Yorkshire sandstones form test panels in George Street and it is anticipated that the results of this test regime will be available in late 2004.

The SSLG, coming late into this situation, has campaigned for of indigenous Scottish sandstone paving to be considered. However, as production stopped at the Carmyllie quarries before there was the requirement for material test data, it was not possible, even at this late stage to introduce this material to the test programme.



Carmyllie Quarry – 8 tons of block was removed in the summer.

However there appears to be a willingness to consider the Carmyllie product providing it meets the determined series of tests and, to that end, some 8 tons of stone has been removed from a quarry and rendered into block to enable the tests be undertaken. At the time of writing the results of these tests are awaited.

Here is a little problem that might be considered by the decision makers – if the test results were to show that the material was "not fit for purpose" then they might wish to consider lifting it from the pavement outside the official residence of the First Minister.

Bearing in mind all the while that it has only survived some 200 years

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