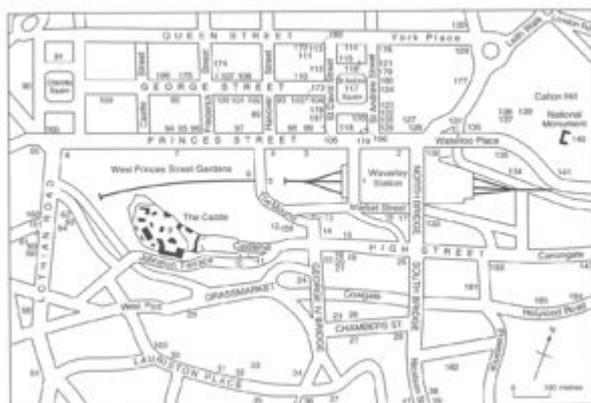


Building stones in Edinburgh from the Carboniferous of the Scottish Borders and England

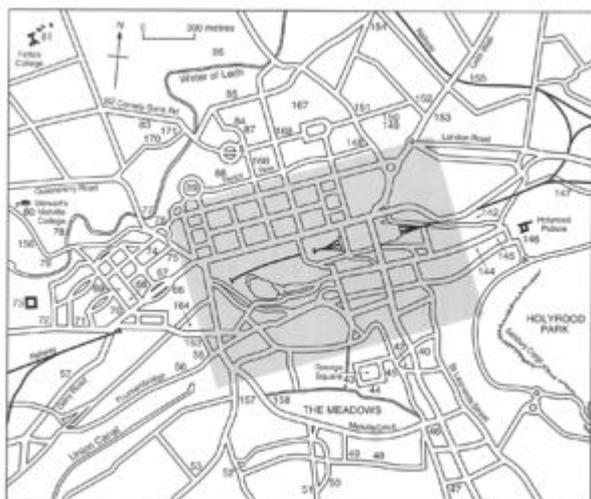
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From: McMillan, A.A., Gillanders, R.J. and Fairhurst, J.A. 1999 [Building stones of Edinburgh](#). Edinburgh: Edinburgh Geological Society.



Edinburgh's buildings - location map, inset (Central Edinburgh).



Edinburgh's buildings - location map.

As demand for sandstone for building declined, the Scottish Midland Valley quarries faced competition from the large quarries in Lower Carboniferous sandstones of northern England, in particular Prudham, Gunnerton, Doddington and Cragg, all of which supplied stone to Edinburgh in the closing years of last century. Transport was made easier as railway links with Edinburgh increased. Many other Northumberland quarries, including Darney and Blaxter, have supplied stone at intervals during the last 100 years. Blaxter continues to operate today. In the 1920s a limited amount of stone was also brought from Scottish Borders quarries by rail.

The recent demand for matching stone for restoration and repairs has encouraged the use of stone from numerous English quarries working sandstones in the Upper Carboniferous Millstone Grit and some in the Coal Measures. Currently, stone from Stainton, County Durham and Stanton Moor,

Derbyshire, appear to be especially popular. Major developments around Lothian Road have employed these and other stone products.

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Swinton and Whitsome Newton

Quarries at Swinton and Whitsome Newton in Berwickshire worked sandstone of the Cementstone Group. According to Watson (1911), Swinton stone, which was a 'delicate pink tint being highly esteemed by architects', was sent to Edinburgh in 'considerable quantities . . . for building villas. Swinton stone was used for the walls of the **Hall of Honour, National War Memorial** (9) (1924-27) at **Edinburgh Castle**.

An example of stone from Whitsome Newton, described as being of a warm cream colour and of a fine texture easily wrought, may be seen in the **Meadows Pillars and Sundial** (158).

Fairloans

North-east of Newcastleton, sandstone was once quarried at Fairloans in the Larriston Sandstone of the Border Group (partly equivalent to the Fell Sandstone Group of Northumberland). Stone brought to Edinburgh from this locality was 'capable of a high polish' and was 'greatly used for monumental purposes'.

Doddington

Sandstones of the Fell Sandstone Group of Northumberland have proved to be a valuable source of good building stone. Edinburgh has examples from a number of quarries, particularly Doddington and Glanton Pike.

Few sandstones have such a characteristic appearance as the locally cross-bedded, light purplish pink sandstone from Doddington near Wooler in Northumberland which was extensively used in Edinburgh from the 1880s. It was often used for dressings with Hailes stone as at the **Royal Observatory** (1892), Blackford Hill, and with Hawkhill Wood stone at the **Reid Memorial Church** (1929-33), West Savile Terrace. Doddington stone is hard and compact. It has stood well as may be observed in the cleaned north-east corner block of **North St David Street/St Andrew Square** (116) (1899; former Scottish Equitable Assurance building). Some red staining brought out by cleaning is evident, particularly at the tops of the dormers. Individual stones show cross-bedding but this is generally quite faint. In North St Andrew Street some of the stones are cracked. Rock-faced Doddington stone can be seen at **No. 65 George Street** (107). Doddington stone was used again in the early 20th century extension to the former **General Post Office** (132) (1908-09) where it can be clearly seen from the North Bridge against the grey Binny stone of the rest of the building. Other examples of Doddington stone can be seen to good advantage at:

Methodist Central Hall (54) (1899-1901), Tollcross.

National War Memorial, Edinburgh Castle (9) (1924-27).

George Watson's College (1930), Colinton Road.

Royal (Dick) Veterinary College (46) (1906-16), Summerhall. With 'pink' Hailes.

Cragg

Quarries at Cragg near Bellingham, working sandstone of the Scremerston Coal Group, supplied much building stone to Edinburgh. Cragg sandstone can be seen at the 'new' **Old Waverley Hotel** (118) on Princes Street built in 1883-87. Here, the weathered polished stone appears grey although it has been cleaned. It cannot be examined at street level. The quoins have weathered at the north-west corner of the building and the ornament above the lintel at the west end of the building also shows signs of weathering. The building has Peterhead granite columns around the windows. A large piece of the Cragg stone has broken off the block in one of the **Meadows Pillars** (158) but the example in the **Sundial** remains unweathered. Craig gives **Merchiston Crescent** (1888) as a further example of Cragg stone.

Probably the finest example of the use of Cragg in Edinburgh is **Jenner's Store** (105) (1893-95), Princes Street. Most of the detail is above street level where extensive replacement of weathered stone was undertaken in 1995, using Blaxter stone, a very good match for Cragg.

Blaxter

Stone from Blaxter Quarry, Elsdon, Otterburn, was extensively used in Edinburgh after the First World War and the Head Office of Blaxter's Ltd. was located in the city during the 1950s. The quarry is currently operated by Tynecastle Stone (under Haydens Northern of Gateshead). The stone is a fine- to medium-grained, buff, slightly micaceous sandstone of the Lower Limestone Group. In the facing of the **National Library of Scotland** (22) (1937-1955) on George IV Bridge the fine-grained stone is of uniform colour and the bedding is not obvious. The lower part of the facing is rusticated on a grey Creetown granite base. In the forty years since completion there has been little deterioration apart from some slight pitting of the stone near the lower windows. The **Royal Museum of Scotland Lecture Theatre** (27) (1958-61) in Lothian Street has a uniform polished facing of a lighter colour and slightly coarser grain. Brown specks and concretions can be seen in this stone which again exhibits little in the way of obvious bedding. An early use of Blaxter stone

(along with Denwick stone) in the form of good quality ashlar was in the construction of the houses in **Arden Street** (51) and adjoining streets in Marchmont between 1905-11. There are many other good examples of Blaxter stone:

Sun Alliance Insurance Building (100) (1955), 68 George Street.

Lothian House (58) (1936), Lothian Road.

Grant Institute of Geology, Kings Buildings (1930-31), West Mains Road.

Scottish & Newcastle Breweries, Head Office (145) (1961), Holyrood Road.

Fountainbridge Telephone Exchange (56) (1949-52), Gardner's Crescent.

Standard Life Assurance Office Extension (111) (1972), Thistle Street.

Burtens (166) (1906-07), 30-31 Princes Street. (formerly R W Forsyth Ltd.)

Darney

Sandstone of the Lower Limestone Group from Darney, West Woodburn is finer grained and paler than Blaxter stone. Quarrying at Darney stopped in 1984 but is listed under Natural Stone Products in the BGS Directory of Mines and Quarries (1998). It was used in the **High Court of Justiciary** (14) (1934-37), Bank Street. This uniform buff-coloured stone is polished and rusticated to the balcony level and shows no signs of weathering. At the **Royal Bank of Scotland** (122) (1936) (formerly National Bank of Scotland), No. 42 St Andrew Square, recently cleaned Darney stone is set off against a Rubislaw (Aberdeen) grey granite base. The polished stone is rusticated up to the first floor level. Close examination shows that the buff-yellowish stone is full of tiny brown specks. Stone from Darney and Leoch Quarry, Dundee was used in the construction of the **Usher Hall** (64) (1910-14). Darney stone, specially polished to resist the adherence of soot, was used in the building of St Andrew's House (135) (1936-39) described as 'by far the most impressive work of architecture in Scotland before the wars'. The base course is of Creetown grey granite. Another use in the 1930s includes the **City Chambers extension** (15) (1930-34) in Cockburn Street. A more recent example includes **No. 45 George Street** (108) (1974).

Prudham



McEwan Hall, Edinburgh. Carboniferous sandstones Polmaise (Stirlingshire) and Prudham (Hexham, Northumberland). Small

red sandstone columns are Triassic St Bees sandstone from Corsehill (Annan). Built in 1888-1897 by Sir R. Rowand Anderson.
IS024

From the end of the 19th century, building stones were brought by rail from the north-east of England. Middle Limestone Group sandstone from Prudham, near Hexham in central Northumberland, was much used from the mid-1880s until 1970. It is a cream-coloured, slightly micaceous coarse-grained sandstone containing tiny brown specks. Fresh stone seen in the cladding above the entrance to the **St Andrew Square Bus Station** (121) (1970), shows brown patches and lamination. Prudham stone was used at the turn of the century for the **Balmoral Hotel** (2) (1902), East End, Princes Street, where its polished surface was very badly weathered, particularly the north and west elevations. Restoration of the stonework, was carried out between 1989 and 1991 using Dunhouse stone. Of all the stones used in the **Meadows Pillars** (158) the Prudham blocks on the east pillar are the worst affected, almost the whole worked surface having weathered away. Large quantities of Prudham stone were used in the **Marchmont** tenements between 1876 and 1914. Other examples include:

Villas in Craighall Gardens (1885-89)

Crown Office (26) (1886-88), (formerly Heriot Watt College), Chambers Street.

London Street Primary School (150) (1887), East London Street.

McEwan Hall (37) (1888-97), Teviot Place.

Norwich Union Life Insurance Group (179) (1970), 32 St Andrew Square.

Gunnerton

This medium hard, fine grained, creamy white sandstone from the Middle Limestone Group was quarried at Barrasford, near Hexham.' It was used in 1885 in the building of tenements in Morningside. It was also used in George Craig's reconstruction of the former **Yardheads School** (1887), Giles Street, Leith. By 1892, the stone was already showing signs of weathering at the **Meadows Pillars** (158).

Dunhouse

The quarry is situated near Staindrop, west of Darlington, County Durham. It has worked since the early 1900s and has been in the hands of the present owners, Dunhouse Quarry Company, since 1933. The sandstone which is in the Upper Carboniferous Millstone Grit, is a fine-grained, buff coloured stone.

In Edinburgh, it has been used widely in repairs and restoration work, for example, in General Accident's offices at Nos. **1-8 Atholl Crescent** (1982-84) and Canning Street (1985) (66). At the peak of this work, the project was using 60% of the quarry's output. The staircases were rebuilt in Woodkirk Brown York stone. The **Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza Hotel** (183) (formerly Scandic Crown Hotel) (1989-90), High Street, used rubble and dressed Dunhouse stone including a colonnade of thirteen arches. Between 1989 and 1991, 2300 cubic feet (65 m³) of Dunhouse stone was used for restoration and repairs to the **Balmoral Hotel** (2) mainly on the east and west elevations and in restoring the cornice of the clock tower.

Other buildings employing Dunhouse stone include:

Marks & Spencers Store (95) (1980), 104 Princes Street.

Exchange Plaza (161) (1997), Lothian Road.

Stainton

For the past few years much of the repair work on Edinburgh's older buildings has been carried out with buff coloured Stainton stone (Millstone Grit) from Barnard Castle, County Durham. This stone often exhibits a brown streaked and speckled appearance, exemplified by the cladding of the extension to **John Lewis' building** (177) on Leith Walk. The more uniform buff colouring is a good match for several of the local Lower Carboniferous stones. It has been used for example for indent repairs (1985) at the **Bank of Scotland** (13), the Mound where it matches Binny, and at the **Royal Museum of Scotland** (27), Chambers Street where it substitutes for Hermand. It is also utilised as a facing stone on recent buildings in central Edinburgh as at Nos. **40-42 George Street** (102). Here the sandstone is broached above street level to match the surrounding buildings which are probably built of Craigleith sandstone. Below street level the stone is rock faced. Stainton has been considerably used for restoration work in the mistaken view that it was a good colour match for Craigleith. Ironically, Stainton stone has been used for the facade to the entrance to **Sainsbury's plc Supermarket** (1993), Queensferry Road, site of the former Craigleith Quarry. A brief history of this famous quarry was published in an excellent leaflet sponsored by Sainsburys plc.

At Castle Terrace, the major **Saltire Court** (63) development (1991) including the **New Traverse Theatre** utilised Stainton stone facing together with red sandstone quoins from the specially re-opened Newton Quarry, Gatelawbridge. The base course is composed of a dark grey, coarse-grained diorite (?) from Scandinavia (Edalhammer and Blaubrun). Small bivalve fossils, coloured deep orange-brown, can be seen in some of the blocks of Stainton stone. Other recent examples of Stainton stone can be seen at:

Albany Street/Broughton Street Office Development (148) (1984).

Royal Hospital for Sick Children (49) (1997), Sciennes Road.

Standard Life building (162) (1997), Lothian Road.

97 George Street (175) (1980). Restoration; and used for central portico and indents.

Catcastle

Yellowish grey to buff, medium to coarse-grained sandstone (Millstone Grit) from Catcastle Quarry, Lartington, Barnard Castle is worked by the Dunhouse Quarry Company Ltd. Stone has been used recently at **No.10 George Street** (173) (1990) and the **Sheriff Court House** (23) (1997), 27-29 Chambers Street.

Wellfield



University George Square Lecture Theatre, Edinburgh. Clad in Carboniferous sandstone from Wellfield quarries (Huddersfield). Built in 1967 by Robert Matthews of Johnson-Marshall & Partners. IS004

'Crossland Hill Hard York Stone' is quarried in the Rough Rock (Millstone Grit) at Wellfield (Crossland Hill) Quarry, west of Huddersfield, by Johnsons Wellfield Ltd.

This sandstone has recently been used to face the front of the **Sheraton Hotel** (61) (1985) in Lothian Road. It may be compared there with the Middle Coal Measures stone from Woodkirk used as cladding on the adjacent **Capital House** (60). The Sheraton exhibits a polished fawn sandstone of a slightly lighter shade than the greenish grey Woodkirk stone which is less uniformly coloured. The Wellfield stone is also somewhat micaceous and the bedding is a little clearer. Some stones are set on end. To match with the adjacent Film House, the rustication on Capital House is taken to the same level. Other examples of recently used Wellfield stone include:

British Home Stores (99) (1965), Princes Street.

George Square Lecture Theatre (44) (1967).

United Distillers House (1981), 33 Ellersly Road.

Scottish Life Assurance Company (112) (1962), North St David Street.

Stoke Hall

Stoke Hall Quarry, near Eyam in Derbyshire (Stoke Hall Quarry Ltd.), supplies a fine-grained orange-buff sandstone, extracted from the Millstone Grit. This stone was used for the first time in Edinburgh to face the **Edinburgh Conference Centre** (164) (1996) in Morrison Street. In this building the large curved modules are precast concrete, coloured to match the fresh sandstone.

Stanton Moor

Stone has been quarried historically over an extensive area of Stanton Moor, near Matlock, Derbyshire in the Ashover Grit (Millstone Grit). This account refers mainly to 'Stanton Moor' sandstone from Palmer's/Dale View Quarry, Stanton-in-Peak, Stanton Moor. This quarry which is currently operated by the Stancliffe Stone Company Ltd. was reopened in 1983. Other quarries in the district include Birchover (Natural Stone Products, Ennstone plc) and New Pillough, Stanton-in-Peak and Wattscliffe, Elton (Block Stone Ltd., Realstone plc).

The 'Stanton Moor' sandstone of Palmer's Quarry is a medium- to fine-grained buff sandstone, variably tinted pink, orange and grey, sometimes in the same block. This variety of texture and colour, combined with ready availability and good weathering resistance, has made the stone a ubiquitous choice where matching stone can no longer be obtained, particularly for those from the Carboniferous of the Midland Valley Stone from Stanton Moor may be seen in many parts of Edinburgh (Appendix 3). Examples of restoration work include **No. 32 St Mary's Street** (181) (1983) and **No. 35 Heriot Row** (88) (1998). Currently, the stone is being used for major developments including **The Dynamic Earth** building, Holyrood Road.

Stancliffe

The Millstone Grit sandstone of Stancliffe Quarry, Darley Dale, recently closed, has also been used for repair work, especially in the New Town. **Nos. 15-21 Palmerston Place** (68), originally constructed in the 1880s using Binny Sandstone from Dalmeny (see above), were repaired with stone from Stancliffe Darley Dale and Dunhouse. Stone from Stancliffe was also used in tenement restorations in **Drummond Street** (1985).

Springwell

A Middle Coal Measures sandstone from Springwell, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear has been used as cladding for **Apex House** (152) (1975) on the north east corner of the junction of Leith Walk and Annandale Street. Polished throughout, this medium-grained, yellowish stone appears rather uniform and featureless. The stone was also used for the restoration of the front elevation of **Nos. 8-11 Royal Crescent** (167) (1979).

Woodkirk

The fine-grained, greenish-grey sandstone quarried at Woodkirk, Morley, Yorkshire has been used as cladding on **Capital House** (60), Lothian Road (see Wellfield, above) and re-cladding at **C & A Stores** (119), 33-38 Princes Street. The latter was originally clad with stone from Blaxter in 1957. Woodkirk stone was also used for the **Hilton National Hotel** (79) (1978), Belford Road.

Heworthburn

Middle Coal Measures sandstone has been quarried at Heworthburn near Felling in Tyne and Wear. This fine-grained, light yellow-brown speckled stone can be observed at **No.2 George Street** (104) near the east end on the south side. The cladding which has some darker patches is not seen at street level because the lower part of the building is faced with black gabbro. The west end of the building above the first floor level is much redder than the front on George Street. Other notable examples in Princes Street are **Frasers Department Store** (165)(1935), **Nos. 145-149 Princes Street** and **Nos. 91-93 Princes Street** (97) (1960s).

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