


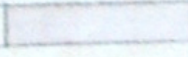



Guide to the Decorative Stone in the Natural History Museum

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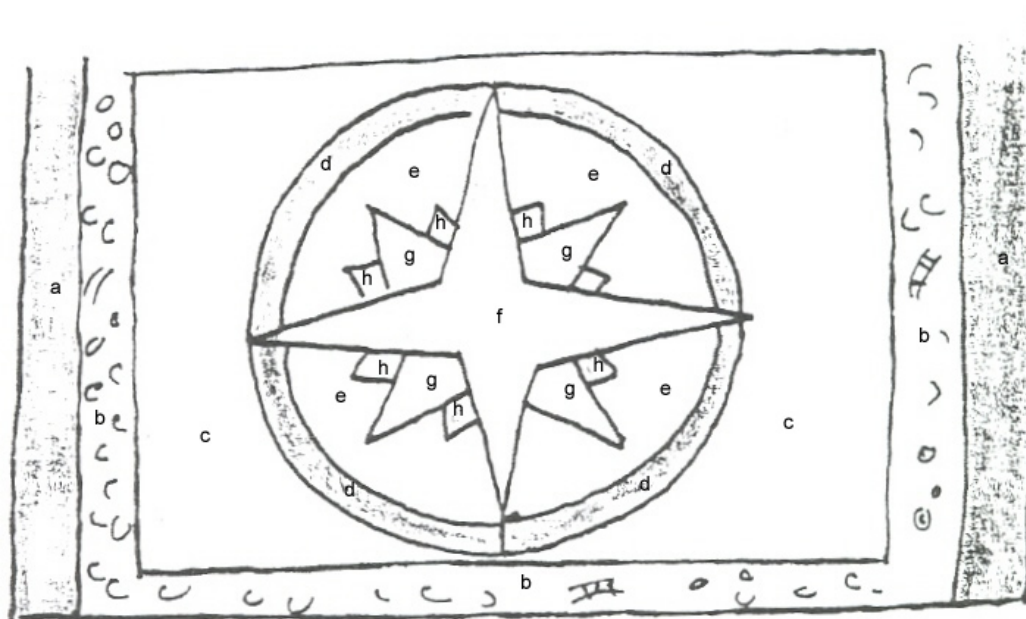
KEY PLAN TO THE BRITISH MARBLES USED IN THE DECORATIVE ARCH

ASHBURTON	
CONNEMARA	
KITLEY GREEN (DEVON)	
PETITOR	
PURBECK	

Decorative Stone in the Earth Galleries

The Geology Museum in South Kensington was built in 1938 to house the national collection of geological specimens held by the Institute of Geological Sciences (now the British Geological Survey) that had outgrown its former home in Jermyn Street. The exterior is built of Portland Stone but the grand entrance to Exhibition Road is decorated by an impressive array of ornamental stones from the British Isles.

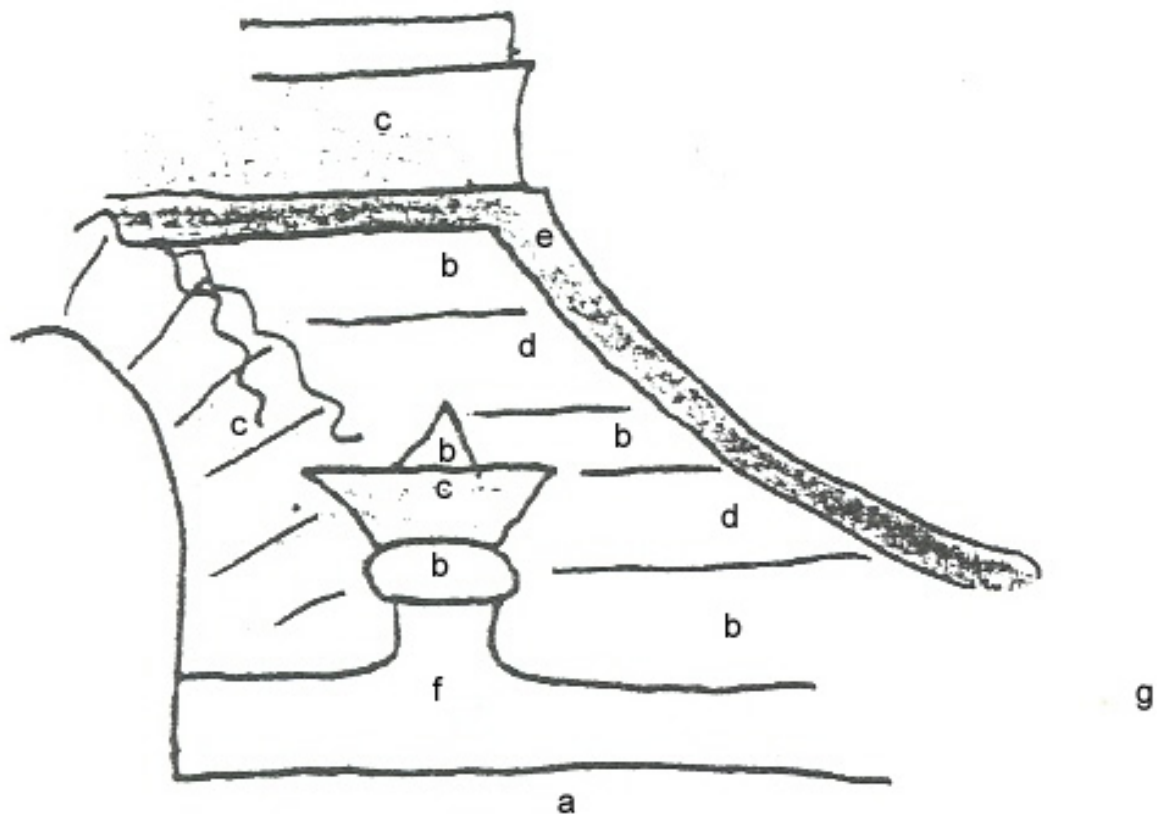
1. Central star and surrounds in the Lobby area



Refer to diagram for key to letters (sketch by Alan Timms).

- h outermost star of pink/red brecciated 'marble' with crinoids and stylolites. *Cork Red Marble, ?Little Island, Early Carboniferous, (stained from Devonian beneath)*
- a black limestone strips (as base of walls) with occasion fossil fragments of corals and brachiopods. *Early Carboniferous, probably from Kilkenny, Ireland*
- b grey limestone with crinoid stems cut in different orientations and stylolites also on stairs), *Early Carboniferous, Wirksworth, Derbyshire*
- c buff Limestone (as on the walls) but without the 'Birds Eyes', *Early Carboniferous, Hoptonwood Limestone, Derbyshire*
- d circle of *Kirkstone Green Slate from Pett's Quarry, Kirkland Pass, Lake District Ordovician.*
Note bands of coarser lapilli and other structures in this water-lain volcanic tuff
- e buff limestone. *Thought to be the same as (c) Early Carboniferous, Hoptonwood Limestone, Derbyshire*
- f central star of green *Connemara Marble, from the west of Ireland, Precambrian*
- g outer star of pale buff limestone. *Probably Hadene Limestone, Derbyshire, Early Carboniferous,*
- h outermost star of pink/red brecciated 'marble' with crinoids and stylolites, *Cork Red Marble, ?Little Island, Early Carboniferous (stained from Devonian beneath)*

Decorative Archway area



- a Flooring of buff limestone with *Syringopora* and *Productus*. Hoptonwood, Early Carboniferous, Derbyshire
- b Green Connemara Marble from the west of Ireland . A late Precambrian true marble.
- c Kitley Green, Devonian marble from Devonshire showing tension gashes
- d Grey Petitor Devonian marble from Torquay area
- e Dark grey Purbeck Marble (Jurassic/Cretaceous Transition) beneath iron railings on stairs, with fossils of freshwater snails (*Viviparous*) and bivalves (*Unio*)
- f Walling at edge of staircase, grey Ashburton Devonian marble with corals including *Thamnopora* and stromatoporoids. The slabs are shot through with calcite and hematite-stained veins.
- g Treads of stairs buff, shelly and burrowed Hoptonwood Limestone, Early Carboniferous, Derbyshire

Thanks to Alan Timms (1) who originated this research and drew the diagrams. Also to John Williams (1) and Monica Price (4)

References (5) OHMS publication, 1964 and other editions: *The Geology Museum: A short guide to the Exhibits*.

The Kensington Table on the Mezzanine

Gordon Walkden, Aberdeen University

The Kensington Table is inscribed 'DEVONSHIRE MARBLES' and it is probable that this is the prize-winning table exhibited by John Woodley at the Great Exhibition of 1851 in Hyde Park.



The table is ornamented entirely with Devonshire Marbles set into a black surround of Carboniferous limestone probably from either Derbyshire or Belgium. There are no diagnostic fossils to determine which. The pedestal is Devonshire Marble probably from the Ashburton quarries, as in the wall panels of the mezzanine.

Centrepiece

white *Alveolites* coral, Babbacombe, Devon

Inset

6x3D boxes of red, yellow and grey Petitor, Babbacombe, Devon. The grey variety has striking *Thamnopora* sp. corals (Bradley Woods 'featherstone').

Inner Ring

garland of 12 rare othocone (fossil cephalopods) in a red matrix from Petitor with 'darts' of white *Thamnopora* rudstone between each (egg and dart arrangement)

Middle Ring

24 radial stones, scalloped on the outer surface, of Petitor reef and near-reef rocks, highlighting the variability of the stones from the Petitor Breccia, mainly from beaches and quarries around Petit Tor Down, Babbacombe. Remnant fossils can be seen in:

115 Rugose coral *Haplothechia* sp

117 Coral debris beach deposit with black 'slime' that grew beneath ('Shadow Rock')

123 Reef-front flat stony sponges (fawn) with seawater-precipitates in between (grey /white). Petitor

Yellow Band

Yellow clouded Petitor

Outer Ring

72 outer tier plaquettes. Remnant corals can be seen in:

03 Tabulate coral *Crassialveolites* sp.

21 Rugose coral *Endophyllum* sp.

31 Tabulate coral *Heliolites* sp.

41 Coral debris beach deposit

67 Tabulate coral *Thamnopora* sp. (Bradley Woods 'featherstone')

Windowsills on public display in *Treasures* exhibition, Cadogan Gallery

There are 46 windowsills of polished ornamental stone surrounding the atrium that is now the Waterhouse café behind the Hintze Hall. They are thought to have been part of the original Waterhouse design of 1881. Most of the stones used are 'marbles', either true marbles or shelly limestones that take a good polish. These are mainly early Carboniferous in age from the British Isles with Devonian examples from Devon and Belgium. Other stones come from Italy and the Alps. Only those in the *Treasures Exhibition* in the Cadogan Gallery are currently on show to the public.



- 1 Black Crinoidal limestone, var. 'Birds Eye', E. Carboniferous, probably from Ashford, Derbyshire
- 2 *Ammonitico Rosso* group, typically Verona, Italy
- 3 Devonshire marble with thick-shelled brachiopods
- 4 Serpentinite *Verde di Genova*, Genoa, Liguria, Italy
- 5 Uncertain European breccia marble similar to *Diasporo tenero di Sicilia*
- 6 *Kilkenny Marble* with small brachiopods E. Carboniferous Limestone County Kilkenny, Ireland
- 7 *Cork Red Limestone* E. Carboniferous Little Island, County Cork, Ireland
- 8 *Connemara Marble* Precambrian, County Galway, Ireland
- 9 A Devonshire marble, likely to be a *Petitor* variety from Petit Tor Quarry, St Marychurch, Devon
- 10 *Frosterly Marble* E. Carboniferous, County Durham with *Dibunophyllum bipartitum* corals
- 11 *Cork Red Limestone* E. Carboniferous Little Island, County Cork, Ireland
- 12 Black Limestone, ?*Ashford Black* Derbyshire, E. Carboniferous (or Galway or Belgium)
- 13 *St Anne's Marble* Devonian, Gougines, Namur, Belgium
- 14 *Rouge Royal* Late Devonian, Meuse Region, Belgium
- 15 *Portoro Marble* Triassic, La Spezia, Liguria, Italy
- 16 *Brechvioletta Marble* Serravezza, Tuscany, Italy
- 17 *Rosso Lavanto* serpentinite, Liguria, Italy
- 18 Metamorphosed breccia possibly *Mischio di Serravezza*, Stazzema, Italy
- 19 *Bardiglio Marble* Tuscany, Italy
- 20 *Carrara Marble* Arabescatto variety, Italy