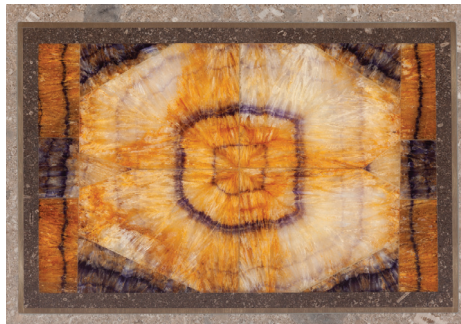


The Jewel in the Fossil...

Two of Derbyshire's most beautiful and rare stones have now come together and are being offered by Natural Stone Sales Ltd, in the form of unique bespoke fire surrounds



The Derbyshire Fossil limestone is from the "once-a-week quarry" near Sheldon. The quarry is owned by the Chatsworth Estate and leased to Mandale Stone Co Ltd. The medium grey coloured limestone takes a high polish and was known locally as Sheldon Marble. The ivory coloured fossils were laid down in the sedimentary bed rock during the carboniferous period some 365 million years ago. The fossils are mainly crinoids, brachiopods, corals and even occasionally shark's teeth!

The stone is won by hand, using traditional methods with "plugs" and "feathers" taking great care not to damage the stone.

The stone is mainly supplied as a roughly squared building stone for house building within the Peak National Park to maintain the character and keep buildings in their local context; however it was also supplied for the perimeter wall of the Tower of London. Dry stone walling is also supplied for some of the seemingly endless miles of field walls, an endearing feature of Derbyshire's beautiful countryside.

Occasionally, when the natural beds are pure enough, a dimensional block is won, which is then sawn into thin slabs. The slabs are then cut, polished and shaped into kitchen work tops, bathroom

vanity tops and fire surrounds.

The quarry has been in existence for many years and reputedly got its name of "once-a-week" in the early nineteenth century, as the workers were paid once-a-week when other quarries locally paid the wages fortnightly.

Natural Stone Sales Ltd are obviously proud of their association with the Chatsworth Estate and have been pleased to receive the Dowager Duchess and the current Duchess to select stone for some of their projects.

"We were particularly pleased to be able to supply a very nicely fossilised, large piece of stone for the late Dukes memorial stone" said Mr Richard Bean of Natural Stone Sales Ltd.

The Blue John stone comes only from the famous series of caverns in Castleton. This beautiful gem stone is mainly used for jewellery these days, but in the eighteenth century it was highly prized in prestigious fire surrounds that adorn many stately homes. Some of the best examples of Blue John are in Chatsworth House, which include the "Blue John Window" and the largest one-piece Blue John tazza ever made.

"I have always been interested in the Pietra Dura work, which was very popular locally in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the Ashford Black marble, which is sadly no longer available. The inlaid Blue John fire surrounds at that time were very grand and highly decorated. As the Blue John is mined from Derbyshire Fossil bed-rock, I thought

that the stones would compliment each other really well in a fire surround".

Blue John Master Craftsmen, Mr Eddie Fisher was approached and asked if he would like to be involved in the Blue John inlaid fire surrounds. Eddie said "The Blue John fire surrounds are amazing and I am really pleased to be involved. I tried to get local stone companies to do this over 20 years ago and no one was interested. As in nature the two stones really do seem to belong together".

The surrounds pictured are in a classical style and almost timeless period. In other words, these surrounds could fit most applications from period homes to a modern semi.

These fire surrounds are unique, "one-offs" for customers that want something really special that cannot be duplicated.

With pietra dura inlaid work, the emphasis is in extremely high quality workmanship – perfection being the goal. The eye is immediately drawn to faults or mistakes when working to these tolerances.

Mrs Jenny Newton has been with the company 13 years and has seen a lot of changes in that time. "Business was extremely good, up until the recession started. At that time 90% of our business was new build related. We then targeted more private work and now private work is up to at least 30% and also the new build has taken off again. We are looking forward to an exceptionally good 2013".

Mrs Lisa Booth – Sales Manager is equally optimistic. "Kitchen worktops are very busy again and enquiry levels are very high. We have already had strong interest in the Blue John fire surrounds and this is

the first attempt to promote them. Our policy is to offer the best quality and service that we can achieve, which seems to work well as most of our orders are referrals from other happy customers".

If you are looking for new kitchen worktops, bathroom vanity tops, a very special fire surround, or any masonry work, give Natural Stones Sales Ltd a call... YOU WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED. ■



Old Station Yard, Rowsley,
Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 2EJ
Telephone – 01629 735507
Fax – 01629 735508
www.naturalstonesalesltd.co.uk

