natural stone

Classification

There are many different classification schemes for stone, which have prompted the industry to simplify descriptions. This has led to many problems when, for instance, a stone laid as a granite is actually found to be a different stone type altogether and does not perform as expected. The British Standard BSEN12440 (Denomination of natural stone) addresses the classification problem and insists upon the correct identification of stone type and origin. For the purposes of this guidance however, the simplified descriptions remain and it must be stressed that all stones should be considered individually for their merits in whatever use they are being considered for.

GRANITE

The term granite has been applied to almost any igneous stone that can retain a polish. True granites provide many of these stones but other types of igneous stone that may fall into this classification include syenites, gabbros, dolerites, and diorites. The metamorphic stones gneiss, schist and granulite are frequently also included in this ‘granite’ classification.

The formation of these igneous rocks by the slow cooling of molten minerals such as quartz, feldspar and hornblende has resulted in a wide variety of colours and grain patterns.

In the United Kingdom the quarrying of granite is concentrated in a small number of locations. Those of particular importance may be found in Devon and Cornwall, Cumbria, at Peterhead and Aberdeen and on the east coast of Scotland.

The main sources for imported granite are Scandinavia, South Africa, Sardinia, Portugal, Spain, India, North America, China and Brazil.

Applications
The interlocking crystal structure imparts both the high strength and low porosity necessary for a wide range of applications other than just flooring; these characteristics are also important in allowing successful use of slabs that are thinner than other types of stone.

Appearance
The immense colour choice includes fine and medium grained silver grey from Devon and Cornwall and fine grained pink from Scotland, whilst other countries provide dense, very fine grained materials with reflective crystals such as larvikite (e.g. blue and emerald pearl) from Norway; reds from Scandinavia and India; large grained brown from Finland; yellows from Brazil; and the delicately mottled greys, fawns and pinks from Sardinia.

The surface finish affects the appearances of granite and those available include sawn, flame textured, dolly pointed, fine axed, rough punched, honed, bush hammered and water jet. It is in the gloss polished form, however, that these granites reveal fully their colours and grain patterns.