



# Industrial Minerals in Tasmania— Granite and Marble

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## Abstract

Granites suitable for use as dimension stone are quite common in the north-eastern part of Tasmania, although most of the granites are of fairly 'ordinary' colouring. Magnesite in the north-western part of the State, near the Arthur River, has been investigated recently as a possible source of stonemasons 'marble'. A study, to be conducted jointly between the Department of Mines and the Tasmanian Development Authority, is planned to provide an inventory of all possible sources of dimension stone, including marble and granite, in Tasmania.

## GRANITE

In stonemasonry terms, the word 'granite' is used to describe a hard rock with a large range of textures and colours. Included in this category are such rocks as basalt and dolerite (known in the trade as 'black granite'), pegmatite, gneiss, diorite, porphyry, aplite; in fact, anything which cannot otherwise be described as 'marble', 'sandstone' or 'slate'. There are vast acreages of true granite outcrops within Tasmania, but most of these granites are of colours and with textures deemed to be unspectacular in stonemasons terms. The locations from which granites have been quarried for use as an ornamental stone are listed below.

### *Diddleum Plains*

A quarry at EQ471223 (Diddleum Plains, 18 km SW of Ringarooma, 15 km NNE of Upper Blessington) is operated for a few months of the year by the owner, Mr J. Dunn. Lease 64M/87 is held over this deposit of brown-golden yellow coloured Devonian granite. Large-sized blocks can be extracted.

### *Memory Creek*

A quarry at EQ586146 (near Mt Saddleback, 50 km east of Launceston) is operated intermittently by the owner, Mr J. Dunn. The rock quarried is a grey-coloured Devonian granite, of which reserves are large, and the stone can be extracted in large blocks because of the wide joint spacing of the deposit. Lease 69M/85 is held over the deposit.

### *Ben Nevis*

A quarry on the eastern slopes of Ben Nevis at EQ537146 (8 km north-east of Upper Blessington) is worked intermittently by Mr Dunn. Lease 63M/87 is held over this deposit of pink coloured granite, which is extracted in large blocks.

### *Trial Harbour*

A lease covering a part of the Heemskirk Granite (Devonian age) at Trial Harbour on the West Coast of Tasmania

(79M/88) was applied for, then dropped. The stone is a dark red colour, and is coarse grained.

### *Coles Bay*

A pink-red coloured granite has been quarried from the Coles Bay area. The quarry site is now surrounded on three sides by land designated with National Park status, and operations have been confined in recent years to the 'tidying up' of previously extracted material. The colour of the stone is pleasing, and some has been used as an external facing stone, but the stone tends to pit and become disfigured as already weathered feldspars are removed by polishing and/or by exposure to the elements. Use of the stone indoors may alleviate some of the tendency for the feldspars to weather out. Leases 11363/M, 89M/72, 35M/87 are all held in the Coles Bay area over reserves of granite.

### *Miena*

A Tertiary-aged basalt has been quarried near Miena and marketed as 'Royburg Black Granite'. The basalt contains microscopic gas vesicles which prevent the block surface from polishing perfectly. The stone is still, however, a very handsome black stone. The area is held under stone lease 1196P/M.

Dolerites around the State have been examined as a source of 'black granite' but these are largely grey, not black in colour, and often have a quite crystalline texture. Dark coloured amphibolites and pyroxenites are a possible source of 'black granite' but to date none of these rock types are quarried for this purpose.

## MARBLE

The term 'marble' is used by stonemasons to refer to almost any carbonate rock which polishes well. Light coloured rock is preferred; the dark grey limestones, of which there are large reserves in the State, are not being used as a decorative stone. A 'marble' was reported from near the mouth of the Gordon River by Curzon Allport in 1899.

Precambrian magnesite from deposits in north-western Tasmania has recently been promoted as 'Tasmatine Marble'. The magnesite in the vicinity of the old Victory Mine on the Arthur River is within Retention Licences 8718 and 8717 held by Mineral Holdings of Australia Ltd and CRAE; and Exploration Licence 43/70, held by Mineral Holdings of Australia Ltd.

The outcrops exposed to date are of well jointed, broken magnesite; large dimension blocks are not common.

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