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Dry Rigg Quarry Visitor Guide





Introduction

Dry Rigg Quarry is a gritstone quarry in Ribblesdale, North Yorkshire, producing a stone with exceptional wearing and skid-resistant properties.

The quarry is in Helwith Bridge, near the A65 and approximately five miles north of Settle, in the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

Who we are and what we do

Dry Rigg Quarry is operated by Lafarge Aggregates & Concrete UK (A&C UK), part of the Lafarge Group, the world leader in construction materials such as rock, sand & gravel, asphalt, cement and gypsum.

From its head office in Paris, Lafarge employs more than 78,000 people in 78 countries across the world.

Here in the UK, Lafarge A&C UK operates from 170 sites and supplies over 10 per cent of society's demand for construction materials.

Our products are essential for building houses, hospitals, offices, shops, roads, railways and airports. We also supply vital ingredients for pharmaceuticals, plastics, paint, glass, farming, steel-making and food processing.

Dry Rigg – why here?

Nearly 300 million years ago, as the North Craven Fault developed through the area we now know as Ribblesdale, some ancient rocks were exposed.

These are now commonly called gritstones but their correct geological descriptions are mudstones/siltstones and greywackes/arkoses. They are thought to be about 420 million years old.

Quarrying has been a traditional activity in this part of Ribblesdale for several centuries. It began in 1780 and mid-19th century maps show 15 quarries working slate, sandstone and limestone. In the Victorian era, quarries expanded as they provided the raw materials for the growth of towns, factories and railways. A number of quarries, including Dry Rigg, supplied hand-made paving flags for the streets and pavements of the rapidly expanding towns of northern England. Other uses of the rock were for stone cisterns storing soft water and even for brewers' vats!

As road building gathered pace so did the demand for stone that was both skid-resistant and hard wearing. The rock from Dry Rigg was found to be ideal for surfacing highways.

Quarrying has become more mechanised over the years. Dry Rigg was expanded in 1930 by the Ford Hill Colliery Company. During the Second World War George Greenwood took it over and ran it until 1964 when it was acquired by Redland plc, which in 1997 became part of the Lafarge Group.

Now Dry Rigg is one of only six English sources of this extremely hard wearing, uniquely skid-resistant material.





How the quarry works

Rock is extracted by carefully controlled blasting, using between six and nine tonnes of explosives to produce over 20,000 tonnes of rock. Blasting is carried out about ten times a year.

The blasted stone is picked up by a mechanised loading shovel and put into dumper trucks. These trucks carry the rock to the crushing plant where it is reduced in size in a three-stage crushing process.

It then passes through a screening plant that sorts the various sizes of stone from 20mm down to 3mm.

On-site laboratory facilities provide comprehensive testing and quality control for the quarry's finished products.

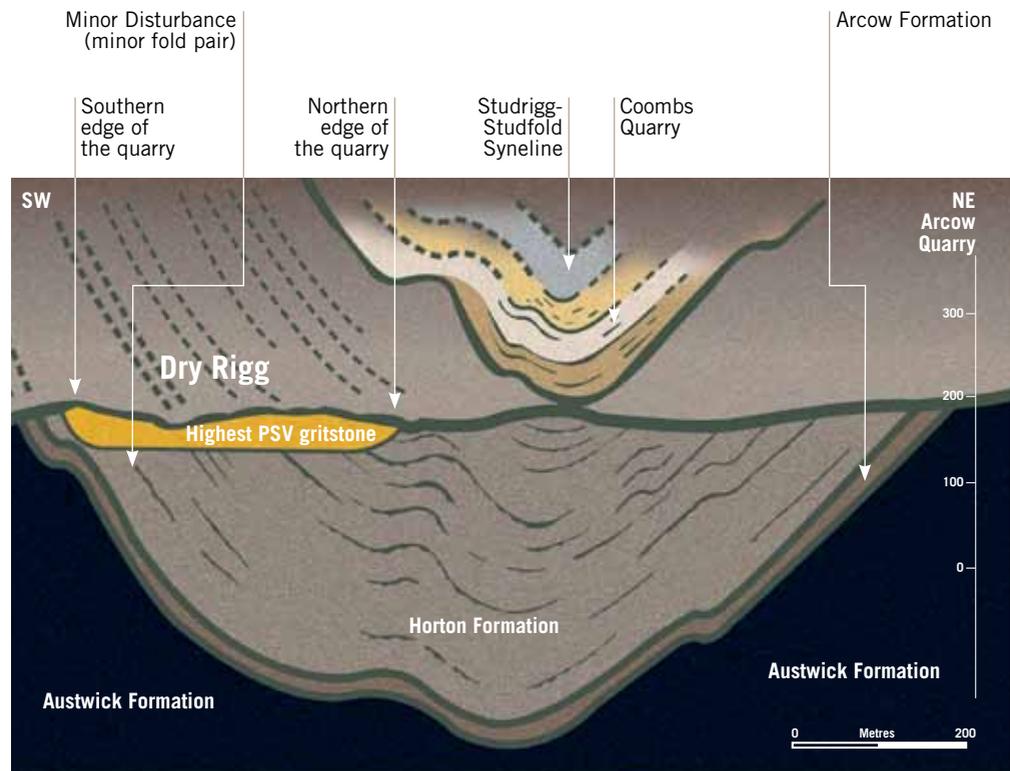
The stone is delivered in sheeted lorries which have their loads checked by a computerised weighbridge.

The finished product is then transported to construction projects all over the UK. Recent work includes the resurfacing of the Newbury by-pass in Berkshire and ongoing maintenance of the M25 motorway around London.

Did you know?
Polished Stone Value - or PSV - is the measure of how skid-resistant a stone is?



A cross-section through Dry Rigg Quarry





Employment

The quarry directly employs local people on site and more people indirectly from the surrounding areas through road haulage and provision of services. Many employees live in the National Park and nearby area, and the quarry contributes over £1 million a year into the local economy.

On-site support comes from Lafarge's in-house specialists in estates management, ecology, geology, sales and distribution.

Demand for Dry Rigg products

The nationally rare qualities of Dry Rigg stone – hard wearing with a high level of skid resistance – make it an essential product for road surfacing where safety is paramount. Airfield runways for the Royal Air Force or special surfaces for trunk roads and motorways are typical examples. Dry Rigg has even supplied aggregate to airfields in the Falkland Islands!

Closer to home Dry Rigg's products are used on many local road improvements. National Highways departments also use its slurry seal products to repair worn surfaces without having to remove the old road surface. Stone for surface dressing is also available, details of the quarry's full range of products are available on request.

Dry Rigg materials have a consistently high PSV rating of 65 – one of only six quarries in England to achieve such a value.

Reducing impacts on the environment

Being in the Yorkshire Dales, one of England's most beautiful national parks, places even greater responsibilities on the quarry operators to respect the environment.

A range of measures have been taken to reduce Dry Rigg's impact on the locality:

- the main processing plant is sited on the floor of the existing quarry
- views of the plant and associated offices from the main valley road have been reduced by the construction of a natural-looking screening mound
- the plant is totally enclosed to reduce dust emissions and noise outputs
- an unused area of the site has been restored to blend in with the landscape
- public footpaths bordering the site have been improved and dry-stone walls have been built in the local style.
- no stone wagons leave the site at weekends and lorry movements are restricted to certain hours mid week.

Encouraging wildlife

Through careful work to create habitats that help wildlife, Dry Rigg has become home to many types of plants and animals. Over 25 species of bird breed on site, including Raven and locally threatened Lapwing. Over a hundred pairs of Sand Martins are also regular breeders. Scarce dragonflies and butterflies can be seen on the restored fen area, which also houses a healthy population of rare Great Crested Newts.

Protecting a special bog

On the northern rim of the site is Swarth Moor, a raised peat bog which is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Lafarge takes an active role in monitoring the bog and is seeking to become involved in managing the site in partnership with Natural England.

Dry Rigg in the community

Each year the quarry is visited by hundreds of school and university students from all over the UK. The site team have been working with the North Yorkshire Business and Education Partnership to improve links with local schools.

Many events and local organisations are also supported by Dry Rigg, including Horton-in-Ribblesdale Gala, Long Preston May Day festival, Settle Pool, Settle Golf Club and The Yorkshire Junior Championship Fell Races at Hellifield Gala.

Pride in Dry Rigg's achievements

Dry Rigg has received a number of awards and accolades that recognise the importance and value of the site. Recently the site won a prestigious conservation award from the British Trust for Ornithology as part of its 'Business Bird Challenge' initiative. Dry Rigg was also a finalist in the 'Environmental Project of the Year' section of the Yorkshire Rural Awards.