

Precious Simplicity



Uncover the source
Discover the pedigree

SSQ Exclusive Slate Products



Welcome to SSQ, producers and suppliers of natural slate for roofing, flooring and architectural applications

SSQ was first established in 1983 as a pioneer importer of Spanish Slate to the UK. Since then, through its global sourcing programme, SSQ has grown steadily to become one of the world's leading producers and suppliers of natural slate products.

With a turnover of £20 million, SSQ produces and exports almost 70,000 tonnes of natural slate every year - enough to cover 2 million square metres of roof.

Forging permanent, exclusive partnerships with some of the world's finest quarries, SSQ has the unique ability to maintain a steady, reliable supply of the highest quality slate. We are guaranteed consistent reserves of high quality material so we can deliver to customers for many years to come.

My vision at SSQ is to provide specifiers with a unique range of exclusive natural slate products. A comprehensive range in terms of colour - blue black, grey, grey green and green - and application - roofing, flooring, window sills, skirting and work-tops

At SSQ we look forward to offering you exclusive slate products for generations to come

Ahmed El-Helw
Chairman - SSQ



SSQ in the UK

The SSQ head office and main UK warehouse are located in London. The warehouse is permanently stocked with at least a million slates to ensure availability and rapid delivery. The office staff or regional SSQ Natural Slate Specialists can provide you with information on price, size, grades and regional nuances. SSQ's technical manager offers free advice on fixing and design and can provide an on site support and inspection service.

An office in central Scotland specialises in meeting the unique requirements of the Scottish market. SSQ sources slate that perfectly matches the appearance and thickness of the indigenous product - ideal for refurbishment and new projects throughout Scotland.

SSQ's International Presence

As well as holding a leading market position in the UK, SSQ has a powerful presence in the markets of mainland Europe.

The group is one of the top three suppliers in Germany – the most demanding, quality conscious market on the continent – a testament to SSQ's absolute dedication to supply consistently high-quality products.



Other European export destinations include France, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Eastern European markets of the Czech Republic, Latvia and Slovakia. SSQ Europe, based in Luxembourg, handles all our West and East European activities.

Outside Europe, SSQ's largest market is the US, while Australia and Japan are also important buyers. The SSQ International division is located at the London headquarters.

SSQ operates in close cooperation with all its partner quarries. Our Spanish office handles the logistics and quality control of all exports from Spain. The Argentinean office manages the Riverstone quarry and the quality control of its product. This strong presence at source is what gives SSQ the leading edge as a supplier of natural roofing slate.



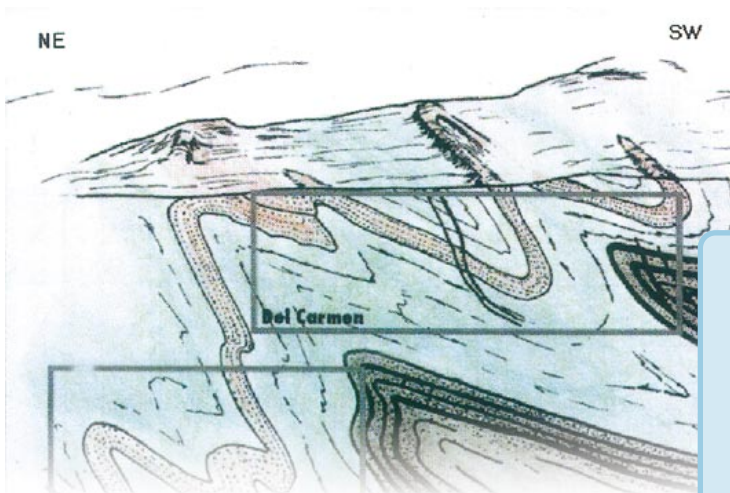


Strategic Partners

SSQ's long-term strategic partnerships with established quarries is key to maintaining a reliable supply and a comprehensive range of products. We are proud of our long-term investment in such partnership ventures as the renowned Del Carmen quarry in Spain and the Riverstone quarry in Argentina. At SSQ we are committed to building our future with material of the highest standard, and we will continue to forge new partnerships to meet customer demand.

Del Carmen has been in operation since 1983 and is one of the single largest quarries in Spain. It lies in the Leon region, an area featuring geomorphic conditions favourable to the formation of uninterrupted seams of high-quality slate. SSQ's legal partnership with the owners of the Del Carmen quarry has enabled slate production of an exceptionally high-quality for over a decade.

The Del Carmen product is a traditional riven slate with a distinctive texture, noted for the rare characteristic of a longitudinal grain. Its blue-black hue is totally natural and will not fade even in the harshest sunlight. As well as meeting the BS 680 part 2, Del Carmen Ultra conforms to the American standard ASTM C406, S1 and is rated class A by the ultimate standard, the French P32/302



Riverstone is located in the La Florida region of central Argentina and has been in operation for hundreds of years. SSQ is the major shareholder in this huge quarry and, to ensure that demand for this beautiful product is met, has invested millions of pounds in the most advanced extraction machinery in the world.



The Riverstone product is available in a variety of formats and colours for both roofing and flooring. The roofing products now available are grey with a hint of green, whilst grey/green and green slates will be available in the near future. Scottish heavy slates are available in addition to the traditional English and Welsh thicknesses. As well as meeting the BS 680 part 2, Riverstone conforms to the American standard ASTM, S1 and like Del Carmen is rated class A by the French standard P32/302.

Riverstone flooring products are available in standard floor tile sizes, calibrated and bevelled in a range of three colours and three finishes. Independent test reports are available for both roofing and flooring.



New Partnership

The new Herbosa and Begonia quarries producing traditional blue/grey slates will come on stream by the end of 2000.



Matching the Vernacular

SSQ recognises the need for specifiers to match the indigenous style of specific regions. Our Scottish Ultra Heavy slate is a perfect match for the natural slate roofs of Scotland.

The deep blue-grey slates exhibit a naturally riven texture and are cut to the traditional size and thickness of Scottish originals. As well as meeting the standard of the BS 680: part 2, Scottish Ultra Heavy also conforms with the French P32/302 norm, Class A.

Modern Extraction Methods

Traditionally much quarrying was carried out using blasting methods, a clumsy wasteful approach. SSQ partnership quarries use the safer, more accurate and environmentally friendly method of diamond saw extraction. The tool cuts large, measured blocks using a thin diamond coated cable.

Unrivalled Quality Control

All SSQ's products undergo strict quality control. Each pallet leaving the quarry is subject to inspection. Accepted pallets are issued with a quality control certificate. This remains with the pallet right through to its final destination, to be seen along the way by the company, the distributor and the customer. To be doubly sure of the quality, independent, random spot checks are carried out to ensure the dimensions and composition of any given product properly match its specification.



Passing the Tests

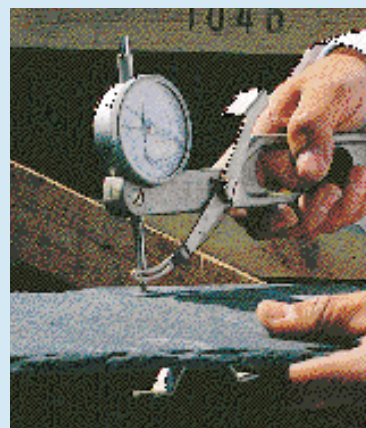
Dedicated to supplying only proven quality slates, all SSQ products are tested to meet a range of international standards. Samples of all SSQ products are tested to the relevant section of BS standards, and the flagship products are tested to the French, German, Belgian and American standards. Del Carmen and Riverstone slates are rated French Class A and American S1.

Our Guarantee

SSQ offer a guarantee of 75 years on the Riverstone and Del Carmen Ultra slates.

The guarantee is a written legal document, based on English law. It comes with the backing of a company with a long-standing UK presence. In the past some importers of Spanish slate have sold inferior quality slate with exaggerated guarantees. This practice has tarnished the reputation of the Spanish slate industry. Before specifying be sure to check the source of any imported slate and ensure it comes with a reliable quality assurance such as the French P32/302 and the US ASTM S1.

English Heritage, Historic Scotland and Snowdonia National Park all accept the use of SSQ slates on traditional and historic buildings - what better testament to the proven quality of SSQ natural slate products.



Testing

There is a certain amount of confusion surrounding the testing and grading of natural slate. The following will help you gain a clearer understanding.

Independent laboratory analyses and on-site testing are carried out to establish how well a slate will perform under various environmental conditions. There are several international standards against which natural slate can be tested. In the UK, the standard for roofing slate is the BS 680 part 2: 1971. This standard requires that slate meets with the accepted levels of three basic criteria - acid resistance, wetting and drying cycles and water absorption. The tests are carried out at a laboratory in the UK on samples sent from the qualifying source.



The French standard is more stringent and is widely recognised as the most comprehensive standard in existence. As well as the three aforementioned criteria, the French P32/302 norm tests to a further nine. The other major strength of the P32/302 is that the samples are selected randomly at the source by the testing authority and the tests are repeated annually. This contrasts with the BS 680 Part 2 which has no expiry date and for which the samples are selected by the company funding the testing. Based on the P32/302 norm, the French have developed a quarry classification system - a French Class A quarry has met successfully with the highest criteria of the French P32/302 norm. Classifications B to D only meet lower criteria and may not be suitable for roofing in the UK.

The American ASTM C406 standard classifies slate S1 to S5 where S1 is of the highest quality. To be classified S1 a slate must have a life expectancy, even under the most demanding conditions of in excess of 75 years. These tests are carried out on samples supplied to the testing laboratory rather than the samples being randomly selected by the testing house itself.

The French and American standards have slightly different focuses and the way to ensure the highest overall performances is to insist upon product testing and approval to both the ASTM S1 and the French P32/302 Class A.



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