

Where does seaside rock come from?

From the sweeties.net wiki

Seaside rock feels like it has always been at the seaside, but it started life inland. Its story runs through Victorian fairgrounds, a sweet works in Yorkshire, and a friendly argument between two Lancashire resorts that has never quite been settled.

Fair rock first

According to Candy UK, a rock maker, rock is believed to have been sold first at fairgrounds in the 19th century, which is why it was originally known as fair rock. It was the same kind of sweet, hard and usually minty, but it did not have the bright casing or the words running through the middle that make seaside rock what it is.

Ben Bullock and Whoa Emma

The man most often credited with the lettered stick is Ben Bullock, a former miner from Burnley. Showtown, the Blackpool museum, records that he set up the Bullocks Excelsior Toffee Works in 1870. His first lettered rock carried the words Whoa Emma, the title of a popular song of the day, and it sold well at markets in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

In 1887 Bullock visited Blackpool and made a batch of rock to send to the resort. From then on the idea of a stick with the town's name inside it spread, and rock became a souvenir you took home from your holiday.

Rock arrives in Blackpool

Showtown credits George Seniors, who had worked for Bullock, as probably the first person to make Blackpool rock in the town itself, in 1902. His Star Confectionery Company on Bank Hey Street let visitors watch the rock being made, which became an attraction in its own right. By the 1920s several more makers had opened, including the Coronation Rock Company in 1927.

Morecambe has its say

Across Morecambe Bay the story is told differently. Morecambe's Dynamite Dick Taylor, a character who had worked with explosives during the First World War, claimed to be the inventor of seaside rock. According to the Lancaster Civic Society, he bought a recipe on a cycling holiday in 1917, stretched his boiled sugar over an iron hook, and opened rock shops in Morecambe after the war. Around 1928 he made rock with the name Morecambe running right through it, and some local historians argue that lettered seaside rock as we know it started there.

So who invented it? Bullock's 1887 rock is the earliest lettered rock in most accounts, but Morecambe's claim is part of the story too, and both towns are happy to keep the debate going.

Rock today

At its height the rock trade had around 50 makers. The Lancaster Civic Society counts about 20 still working, and much of the rock sold in other resorts, Morecambe included, is now made in Blackpool. It is still rolled by hand, and you can read exactly how in [how seaside rock is made](#).

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