

WITHERITE

BaCO₃ Barium Carbonate

Often found in association with baryte, witherite is a very dense, heavy mineral. It is found at many mining sites in the Central Wales ore field, particularly those mines which were once producing galena (lead), and baryte. It is named after William Withering, an English physician who discovered it's difference in chemical properties from baryte in 1784. It can be quite difficult to distinguish from baryte, which it closely resembles in appearance.

Although witherite is not uncommon in Central Wales, the main occurrences of witherite in the U.K. are found in Northumberland and Cumberland. witherite is the chief source of barium salts, which have applications in areas of industry, including the manufacture of glass and porcelain. An interesting use of barium salts, which are poisonous, is in the preparation of rat poison.

**Witherite
Crystal habit.**



Witherite crystallises in the orthorhombic system, and the crystals are usually twinned, quite often adopting a pseudo-hexagonal form. The mineral has a very high specific gravity of 4.5 which is very high for a translucent mineral. Its colour can vary from white, through cream, and even to light brown. Sometimes it has a creamy pearly ordered appearance, which is quite distinctive, but more usually it is an off white colour, and without any apparent crystals it is hard to distinguish from baryte.
