

The Geology of Oxford Gravestones

Nina Morgan and Philip Powell

Geologica Press £14.99

by *Kirsten Claiden-Yardley*

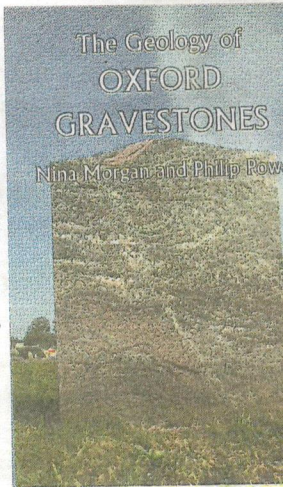
In this beautifully illustrated volume, Nina Morgan and Philip Powell provide a fresh perspective on Oxford's churchyards as 'geological treasure-troves'. Six cemeteries are featured – Holywell Cemetery, St Sepulchre's Cemetery, the churchyard of St Thomas the Martyr, the churchyard of St Mary and St John, the churchyard of St Andrew's Headington and the Headington Municipal Cemetery.

It is best described as a gazetteer that addresses each cemetery in turn, selecting a range of gravestones as case studies for different stone types. Whilst Morgan and Powell are both geologists by training, they have taken the time to produce a short history of each cemetery and of the individuals commemorated by each gravestone which adds to the broader appeal of this book. Each entry includes a short description of the composition of the gravestone, and a longer section on how to identify that particular stone type. Photographs illustrate the gravestones as well as providing close-ups of the stones' surfaces, and interesting features such as lichens, inscriptions and fossils.

This is a well-written book that provides an accessible introduction to geology; to the gravestones of Oxford; and to the historical developments, such as the introduction of railways, that had an impact on the availability of different stones.

It would be of particular interest to those wanting to further their knowledge and understanding of the featured cemeteries. More generally, the detailed descriptions and photographs mean that it would be an invaluable aid to anyone attempting to identify the composition and origin of a gravestone in other churchyards. Above all, it encourages us to reflect on the wide variety of stones in our churchyards and what they can tell us about both the sciences and society.

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