

Summer Rockhop and Field Trip Reports

Shrewsbury Cemetery: David Pannett: 20th April, 2013

The four participants on this Rockhop went with David first to the monumental masons. The granddaughter of the founder explained current trends and showed imported rocks from around the world. Very popular granites come from India (Chinese ones are avoided as the granites are dyed and fade quickly), also Norwegian Larvikite containing large flat feldspar crystals, each reflecting light in a different direction. The mystery of the 'black' granite turned out to be the effect of polishing – the raw granite is grey! (*photo below*).



Retaining walls in the vicinity were built largely of 'leftover' roadstones, probably Keele beds from the Sharpstone quarry. Only the corners and capping stones were of the better quality Grinshill sandstone, which is also the building material of the chapel of 1870.

Victorian tombs were often made from Grinshill stone, with columns of marble to add more 'quality'. Larger marble surfaces are by now covered in lichen, looking suitably weathered. We found one tombstone made of a hard dark red sandstone of uncertain provenance. One elaborate tomb made of Aberdeen granite had lost its obelisk which was lying next to it (*photo above right*) – no wonder there is a height restriction on structures nowadays! .



We came across a rusticated granite cross, another fashion of Victorian times. David also found one mudstone tomb, extensively covered in lichen. The military part of the cemetery had uniform crosses of white Portland stone, containing many fossils. The soldiers remembered there were not all British but came from all corners of the world, some did not even show an affiliation – there was just a name.

The leader being David Pannett, we were treated to a well rounded rockhop that even included botany: magnolias are rather ancient, primitive flowering plants dating back to the Cretaceous – they came from China and America, which were then on the same continent. David also explained which parts of the cemetery were natural, and where there was 'landscaping'.

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